

AT FAIZPUR CONGRESS, 1936

Babu Rajendra Prasad, Pandit Govind Vallabh Pant, Mr. Bhulabhai Desai, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Gandhiji, Sardar Patel, Moulana Abul Kalam Azad.

I FOLLOW THE MAHATMA

by

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PREFACE

THIS book does not claim to be an objective study of Gandhiji, nor a record of his achievements. It is the narrative of my own personal reactions to Gandhiji and his activities; a record of how my outlook on many essentials of modern Indian life underwent a change as a result of contact with him, and how, in the new light, I came to view him and the technique and philosophy for which he stands. I dare say, possibly Gandhiji, and certainly many friends, may not agree with me in my estimate of his work or his views. But I have the satisfaction of feeling that it has been worked out in the light of personal experience and convictions. In placing such a record before the public, it has been found impossible to omit certain personal details.

If the reader finds anything in this little book to help him in understanding this Colossus who bestrides the world, my labours will have been amply requited.

K. M. MUNSHI

BOMBAY,
20*th March* 1940.

I FOLLOW THE MAHATMA

CHAPTER I

My First Contact

MY interest in politics began with the 18th Session of the Indian National Congress held in Ahmedabad in 1903 under the presidentship of the late Sir (then Mr.) Surendra Nath Banerjee. I was then in the first year at college.

The Russo-Japanese War, the Partition of Bengal and the consequent political upheaval in the country drew me to Nationalism of the Mazzinian brand.

Mr. Arvinda Ghosh was then in Baroda, sometime as our Professor and at other time as Secretary to H. H. the Gaekwar; and I was one of the ardent brand of "revolutionaries" who talked of Garibaldi and the French Revolution, and hoped to win India's freedom by a few hundred drachms of picric acid.

The Surat Congress (1909) found in me an enthusiastic volunteer in the camp of the extremists, fascinated by Mr. Arvinda Ghosh's political and spiritual philosophy—*Swadeshi*, Boycott, the Cult of Violence, *Karmayoga* and the Worship of the Motherland.

It was in 1910 or 1911 that Mr. H. S. L. Polak, then in India, came and stayed with me for a few hours at my native town, Broach, on his way to Bombay. He had then met many of the great political leaders in India. Discussing the relative merits of the leaders, he said: "Not one of them is fit to hold a candle to Mr. Gandhi."

Mr. Polak's devotion to Gandhiji was then at its height, but I, with my great admiration for Mr. Arvinda Ghosh, felt hurt at the remark.

Years flew past.

I had started practice on the Original Side of the High Court for about a year, when in 1914, Gandhiji returned to India with the halo of a great triumph achieved in South Africa.

The elite of Bombay gathered to receive him, if I remember right, at a garden party given by Mr. Jehangir B. Petit at his Pedder Road house. Those were the days of Sir Pherozshah Mehta, of Western fashion and aristocratic patriotism; and the pomp and beauty and brilliance of Bombay were all there.

The guest arrived, barefooted, dressed in a short *dhoti*, and a Kathiawadi *angarkha* and *sapha*. He was the very image of insignificance. Aristocracy stood shocked beyond words.

A lady who, dressed in the height of fashion, was standing next to me, was scandalized. She exclaimed: "Is this Gandhi ? Looks like my tailor, Dhana !"

But, we youngsters, were all proud of his achievements. Gurjar Sabha, a society of young Gujaratis of which I was then Secretary, gave him a warm reception with Mr. Jinnah presiding. Gandhiji spoke in Gujarati, Mr. Jinnah, of course, in English. But we all felt convinced that whatever Gandhiji's achievements might have been in a foreign land, he would soon find his place in India, where so many great leaders ruled public opinion.

Curious stories about him shocked everybody.

Bare feet were bad enough, but third-class travel was worse.

He was no doubt a crank and, like all such, highly opinionative—that was the universal verdict of politicians in Bombay.

At the time, some young men were keen on storming the citadel of Bombay public life; and my passionate Arvindian nationalism was found attractive by some of them.

Sir Pherozshah Mehta lay dying, and we let ourselves loose on the Bombay Presidency Association at its annual meeting. The old veterans receded in horror, and we soon came to have an effective voice in that body.

The Great War started.

Gandhiji was then busy collecting recruits for the army and had thereby incurred the displeasure of many.

Mrs. Besant had just started her Home Rule movement, founded the All-India Home Rule League, and commenced rousing the country from its lethargy by her splendid orations.

In 1915, the Bombay branch of the Home Rule League was started. Mr. Jinnah was the President. I was induced by my old friends to join the League; and every week-end we went out to Gujarat on lecturing tours.

Maharashtra started another League with Lokamanya Tilak as the President, and the two Leagues worked in close co-operation.

A new spirit had come over the public life of the Province.

Under Mrs. Besant's influence, some of us started *Young India* as a weekly. Mr. Jamnadas Dwarkadas and I were joint Editors. Mr. Indulal Yagnik started the monthly *Navajivan* in Gujarati.

But soon after the Bombay Congress (1915) was over, some differences led me to sever my connection with this work.

Mr. Jinnah, of those days, was a thoroughbred nationalist. He captured the Muslim League in the interest of nationalism and worked for the Lucknow Pact. He had not then come to love the community before the nation.

The Great War continued with unprecedented ferocity and the years were crowded with events.

The Mesopotamian muddle; the subsequent debates in the House of Commons when Mr. Montagu characterized the Indian Services as "wooden"; his appointment as Secretary of State for India in the place of Sir Austen Chamberlain, who resigned; and his famous Declaration of August 20, 1917, announcing Responsible Government as India's goal; all these events form landmarks in modern Indian History. Each of these events raised the Home Rule Leaguers' hopes and spurred them on to more intense activity.

Mrs. Besant became the President of the Congress at Calcutta in 1917, and came to dominate it. The Liberals kept out of the Congress and ceased to be a live force in advanced politics. Mr. Montagu was then in India, and we submitted a representation which was drafted by a sub-committee, of which I was a member.

Then the Montagu-Chelmsford Report was presented to Parliament in July 1918; and Mrs. Besant declared it "unworthy of England to offer and of India to accept."

The world was moving fast and Self-Determination seemed within India's easy grasp.

CHAPTER II

Gandhiji Enters the Arena

GANDHIJI had, on his return to India, settled down at Ahmedabad and appeared to be ploughing a lonely furrow; in fact, he was forging a new technique and gathering round himself a band of devout followers.

On May 25, 1915, he founded the Sabarmati *Ashram*; and by threats of *satyagraha*, got the Government of India to revise the policy of the Viramgam Cordon in 1915 and that of the emigration of indentured labour in 1917.

In 1917, Gandhiji gave the first object-lesson in individual Civil Disobedience at Champaran.

Said Gandhiji, when arrested:

> It is my firm belief that in the complex constitution, under which we are living, the only safe and honourable course for a self-respecting man is, in the circumstances such as face me to-day, to do what I have decided to do, that is, submit without protest to the penalty of disobedience.

Strange words which stirred our hearts to the depths —though without evoking response!

The attempt of Champaran succeeded and was soon followed by another success at Kaira in 1918.

In March 1918, Gandhiji led the industrial strike at Ahmedabad, which ended in success after he had gone on hunger-strike.

The general impression of Gandhiji that prevailed in our circle could not be described more amply than in the words of Mr. Montagu: "He dresses like a coolie, forswears all personal advancement, lives practically on air, and is a pure visionary."

About this time, Mr. Shankarlal Banker had, however, put himself in touch with Gandhiji, who had produced a remarkable impression on him. Mrs. Besant was then already frightened of the spectre of Home Rule, which she herself had raised; and in action, no doubt, she paled before Gandhiji. As a result, some of us, who owed no personal allegiance to her, met and decided to bring Gandhiji in as the President of the All-India Home Rule League. I was one of the last to yield on the point; I then considered Gandhiji's ways uncertain, arbitrary and unpractical. Much later, he said to me: "I do not understand educated men, and they do not understand me; but the masses know me and I know them."

He was right; educated men have come to believe in him because what he says comes true, not because they are convinced. But at that time few in India knew that his vision was unerring.

Gandhiji was elected President of the All-India Home Rule League and some of my friends who thought they were king-makers, found to their surprise that he was no king log. No resolution could be adopted, unless it was drafted by him. We had no chance to have votes taken; a few minutes' discussion reduced every one to passive acquiescence. And in a short time we found that his popularity was growing so immense that far from our having obliged him by installing him in that place, it was he who obliged us by remaining with us. If he left us, we

would be eliminated. Even the fiery, impetuous Mr. Umar Sobhani, who grumbled and stormed, only ended by yielding.

At a meeting of the Council, some of us held out for boycott of British goods against Gandhiji's proposal of swadeshism. We were told that political success could be achieved by love, not by hatred. According to us, without the leaven of hatred, which boycott implied, no movement was possible. We were clamorous, insistent. Then he whipped out the pistol with which India has since become familiar. He said to us: "If you adopt boycott as a part of your programme, I will have to resign. I cannot then continue with you any longer."

We were aghast; our sense of democracy was shocked. What was the use of a committee, we argued, if every member threatened to resign, if outvoted. We were soon to learn that a superman was in our midst, and we had to submit or get out.

CHAPTER III

A Napoleon Had Come

MR. MONTAGU, during his visit to India, had stated in his downright manner: "I wish I could get the damned bureaucracy to realize that we are sitting on a volcano."

But the self-satisfied bureaucracy never realized this seismic danger. When the Montford Reforms could have made India contented, the bureaucracy sprang the Rowlatt Acts upon it. The war was over; India's support was no longer needed; and the British statesmen, no longer troubled by international difficulties, approved of these Acts. And, Britain's mistake was Gandhiji's opportunity.

A *Satyagraha* Committee was formed in Bombay. Mr. Umar Sobhani and Mr. Shankarlal Banker became its Secretaries leaving the Home Rule League to Mr. Kanji Dwarkadas and me. This Committee and the Home Rule League were, however, really controlled by one man—Gandhiji.

A Napoleon had come; and colleagues were soon sliding back to the position of soldiers or camp-followers. Mr. Umar Sobhani, the rich and impetuous king-maker, had got more copies of a pamphlet printed than were actually declared on it. But, his attention was drawn to the consequences if Gandhiji came to know of it, and the extra copies were taken at dead of night to Sewri and burnt. Gandhiji, nevertheless, came to know of this incident and insisted on Mr. Umar Sobhani going to the

Police Commissioner and confessing the "crime." It was too much for the headstrong Mr. Umar Sobhani. He swore, as he alone knew how to. But Gandhiji insisted: if his wishes were not complied with, he would resign. Foaming at the mouth, Mr. Umar Sobhani yielded; and the Police Commissioner smiled to see this proud man confessing to an illegality.

I was one of those who hailed the Rowlatt *satyagraha* with delight. The great days of a revolution seemed to be coming. Mobs lost control of themselves and perpetrated horrors at Ahmedabad and Amritsar. The Jallianwala Baug tragedy followed. But suddenly, the Prophet of Revolution appeared to turn tail. He was shocked. He admitted that he had blundered and confessed that the blunder was Himalayan. He suspended the movement and fasted like a penitent sinner; and I felt deeply humiliated at having a leader who, I thought, had not the courage to face the natural consequences of his own plans.

The Hunter Committee was appointed to investigate into the affairs in the Punjab. The Gandhian touch had not altered values in political life and I was briefed by the Bombay Presidency Association to appear before the Committee on a fee of Rs. 3,000 per month. The day before I was to start for Lahore, however, the Association was informed that the Committee had been boycotted and Gandhiji was setting up a rival committee. My engagement was cancelled to my great relief; for I had a feeling that the remuneration was not adequate!

In the Christmas of 1919, the Congress met under the conflicting shadows of the Montford Reforms and Jallianwala Baug. The Subjects Committee, of which I was a member, was the most momentous I had seen. Pandit Motilal Nehru and Mrs. Besant formed one group;

Lokamanya Tilak and Mr. Bepin Chandra Pal, supported by Mr. C. R. Das (he came to be called *Deshbandhu* later), in morning dress, led the bulk of the members. Gandhiji was there—alone, silent, inscrutable.

The debate on the Reforms was characterized by extravagant claims on both sides. Someone, in mid-Victorian periods, suggested that a statue should be raised to Mr. Montagu in every village. Mr. Satyamurti, I think it was, who, in a terrible speech, indicted Lord Chelmsford as the worst Viceroy in the annals of India.

Then a resolution was moved condemning both the massacre of Jallianwala and the mad frenzy of the crowds during the Amritsar riots. The hearts of most of us revolted at the latter part of the resolution. Was the killing of a couple of Europeans to be placed on the same level with the cold-blooded massacre of hundreds of innocent men and women? This must have been Mrs. Besant's work, many thought; she was after all British. And one Punjab leader gave expression to the feeling rather crudely: no one born of an Indian, said he, could have drafted this resolution. Lokamanya was indignant and so were Mr. Bepin Chandra Pal and Mr. C. R. Das; and the latter part of the resolution was lost by an overwhelming majority.

We went home happy, but the next morning it came to be talked about that Gandhiji had passed a sleepless night because the latter part of the resolution was lost. I heard some of the great leaders growing sarcastic over the reported vigil. They had an uneasy feeling, I had no doubt, that this saint, with his fasts and vigils, was scarcely safe company.

When the next day's session started, the President wanted the Committee to reconsider the resolution, as

Gandhiji was very keen on it. There were vehement protests. Ultimately Gandhiji was helped to the table—even then, if I remember right, he spoke sitting—to move that the resolution be reconsidered. Out of respect the House sat quiet but with ill-concealed impatience.

After the Punjab leader had said that no son born of an Indian mother could have drafted the resolution—Gandhiji stated in effect—he had considered deeply and long whether as an Indian he could have drafted the resolution; for, indeed, it had been drafted by him. But after long searching of heart he had come to the conclusion that an Indian alone could have drafted it.

And then he spoke as if his whole life depended upon the question. For almost an hour, he kept us spellbound. The magic influence of his words and his presence swept us off our feet. When he stopped, we were at his feet.

Then followed the debate. Ridicule was poured on the mover by more than one leader. The old guard struggled manfully. Even bitter insinuations and flippant jibes were not spared. But to no purpose. The resolution was reconsidered and accepted in its original form. Later, he had his way in getting a resolution accepting the Reforms passed. He was also asked to redraft the Congress Constitution.

The old guard was routed: Gandhiji was left in possession of the field, its unquestioned master.

CHAPTER IV

Birth-pangs of a New Era

THE last Great War had come and gone. The British Government had become indifferent to Indian aspirations; the bureaucracy was more concerned with strengthening its grip which the preoccupations of the war had weakened. And Gandhiji grew distrustful.

Then came the Special Session of the Congress held in Calcutta in August 1920, where the campaign of Non-violent Non-co-operation was launched. With Napoleonic swiftness, Gandhiji descended upon the country and conquered it. The death of the Lokamanya on the eve of the Congress, left a deep void, which has not been filled since.

We, on the other hand, did not know where we were with this saintly whirlwind. When *khadi* was "invented" as an instrument of *swaraj*, some of us felt that we were not bound to carry our loyalty to the visionary limits to which Congress politics were being carried. In his scheme of things, Gandhiji also had no place for doubting Thomases like us, who were immersed in professional work for the best part of the year.

To suit his own views and programme Gandhiji sought the alteration of the aims and objects of the All-India Home Rule League to the following effect:

(1) To secure complete *swaraj* for India according to the wishes of the Indian people.

(2) To carry on a continuous propaganda with a view to organizing the people for peaceful and effective action to achieve such *swaraj*, and to take such action whenever necessary.

(3) The interpretation of the word *swaraj* as used herein shall not be extended beyond Article 1 of the Congress Constitution.

And on October 7, 1920, nineteen of us got out of the League, when at its general meeting held in Bombay on the 3rd, a ruling which appeared to us to be wrong was given by the chair in order that the objects of the League might be changed.

Among the seceders were Mr. M. A. Jinnah, Mr. M. R. Jayakar, Mr. H. V. Divatia, Mr. Jamnadas Dwarkadas, Mr. N. T. Master, Mr. Jamnadas M. Mehta, Mr. Mangaldas M. Pakvasa and myself.

Our joint letter of resignation contended that the changes made in the constitution constituted a fundamental departure from the aims and objects and methods of work, hitherto pursued by the League. The new constitution deliberately omitted any reference to the British connection and was clearly permissive of unconstitutional and illegal activities, provided they were peaceful and effective.

Gandhiji rejoined by a letter in the Press in the course of which, perhaps for the first time, he clearly defined his attitude, which was thereafter to become the basis of our national politics.

Said Gandhiji:

I want my country to have *swaraj* whether with or without the British connection. I am not opposed to the connection by itself but I do not wish to make a fetish

of it. I will not keep India for a single minute under slavery for the sake of that connection. But I and those who think with me have limited our ambition in order that we can carry the Congress with us and be thus enabled to remain affiliated to that body.

* * * *

An ex-Advocate-General of Madras considers Non-co-operation to be unconstitutional. If I have understood you correctly you consider it to be perfectly constitutional. The President of the Special Congress (Calcutta, August 1920) gave it as his considered ruling that my resolution (on Non-co-operation) was not unconstitutional. As a not indifferent lawyer of twenty years' unbroken practice, I confess it is difficult for me to conceive an illustration under the British Constitution of unconstitutional activity except it be violence. And violence has been specially eschewed from the (revised) constitution.

Jurists have differed on the interpretation (of the word "illegal"). A cyclist cycling without a lamp to fetch a doctor acts contrary to law but does not engage in an "illegal" activity. He voluntarily pays the fine and thus honours the law.

To disregard a tyrannical administrative order may be contrary to law, but it is not in my opinion an "illegal activity."

To make strong speeches amounting in the opinion of an erratic judge to sedition is not an illegal activity.

* * * *

It is a most dangerous thing for a country fighting for its very life, its honour and its religion to tie itself

down in a knot of indefinable expressions. Surely all public bodies will think out for themselves, the methods to be adopted for winning freedom for the country. I personally hate unconstitutionalism and illegalities, but I refuse to make a fetish of these as I refuse to make a fetish of the British connection.

* * * *

If you wish to take your share in the new life that has opened up before the country, and benefit the country by your experience and guidance, and if you do not consider that there is anything fundamentally opposed to your conscience I invite you and your co-signatories to reconsider your resignation.

* * * *

Needless to say, we did not respond to the invitation. We stayed out.

At the time, politicians in India knew only two methods of political warfare, the constitutional and the peaceful, as against the unconstitutional and violent. The first was understood to point to a gradual broadening of liberties till India acquired the status of a Dominion in the British Commonwealth; the second which was always thought of in terms of anarchical crimes, rebellion and war, was, in view of India's unarmed condition, considered impossible of adoption. No one then had heard of a non-violent war or a peaceful revolution, which, while securing to India the substance of Independence, would make the Commonwealth a self-imposed international convenience; and when Gandhiji talked of movements which might or might not be unconstitutional and yet peaceful, people called it casuistry. They suspected camouflage and Mr. Jinnah and his friends were among them.

At the Nagpur Congress (December 1920), Mr. Jayakar and I were together all the time; and we felt stifled in the atmosphere which we considered unreal, when leaders talked of the British Empire already "lying dead and buried, seven fathoms deep."

Gandhiji was a phenomenon which compelled admiration, but to me he remained incomprehensible. After Nagpur, I was asked to see him in connection with the Gujarata *Vidyapitha*, but I was too afraid to go near him.

My turn had not yet come; and I left the Congress.

CHAPTER V

"PRIZE BOY"

SINCE 1915, Gandhiji had been consolidating his forces in Gujarat.

He organized some villages, intensified the political consciousness of the people in Gujarat, and consolidated the partnership in politics between the Gujarati politician, business man and peasant. He also founded the Gujarata *Vidyapitha* at Ahmedabad, and the scholars who joined it in the beginning stimulated the intellectual life of that city. Gujaratis, all over the world, felt proud of so great a man and backed all his activities. Political work became the dominant passion of their life.

But after I left the Congress, I ceased to exercise myself about Gandhiji's activities. To me his principles appeared unconvincing, and his methods reactionary and incomprehensible. I, however, felt a new life running through the veins of Gujarat, and as an exponent of its life and literature I noted with pride the tremendous influence of good which Gandhiji was wielding.

From 1920 to 1925, I was deeply absorbed in professional work and the shadow that personal worries cast upon three of those years of my life was relieved only by literary activities. Among the men who dabbled in Gujarati literature, I was a romanticist. I preached my creed of "Art for Art's sake" in my novel and drama; and I had frequent occasions to criticize the new band of literary men who had sprung up round Gandhiji.

In 1926, I met Gandhiji once. The *Sahitya Sansad*, a literary society of Bombay, of which I was the President, had invited the Gujarata Literary Conference to Bombay; but in order to frustrate my attempts to reorganize that body, certain groups put forward the proposal of electing Gandhiji as its President. I then went to him : pointed out the impossibility of literary men settling down to the business of reorganization, if the Conference were converted into a huge Gandhian demonstration by reason of his presence; and I asked him whether, under the circumstances, he could agree to refuse to be proposed. It was the height of temerity for me to have gone on such an errand. But I was in dead earnest about reorganizing the Conference, and I thought, great man that he was, he *would* understand. And he did. He complimented me on my frankness, saw my point, and promptly acceded to my request.

* * * *

About the end of 1925, I was elected a Fellow of the Bombay University, and in 1926, to the Bombay Legislative Council as an Independent. In the Council, about ten Congressmen without a programme or effective leadership kept the flag flying by delivering speeches, which however fell flat on the house. I was then associated with Sheth Lalji Naranji in founding the Coalition Nationalist Party to support two Ministers who had a somewhat progressive outlook. Under the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms the Ministers were supported in power by the votes of the official bloc and the communal members whose thirst for official favour was insatiate. I helped the then Minister of Education to frame and pilot the University Bill; delivered speeches which could have fetched elocution prizes in that assembly; and for some time was generally regarded by the Treasury Benches as a sort of prize boy.

But, my soul revolted against the realities, or rather, the unrealities, of the situation. The communalists sold their votes shamelessly; we—though over 30—could not extract anything in the shape of popular concessions and soon sank into willing instruments in the hands of Sir Chunilal Mehta, the capable Finance Member, in his strategic moves against his colleagues. The best of us were anxious for a friendly nod or a hospitable tea from the formidable Home Member, Sir Ernest Hotson. The University Bill, for which I had come to the Council, had been passed : I had no intention to exchange the freedom of the Bar for Office; and I hated to be patronized by the Government Benches, who called me "sober" and "practical" if I happened to support them, and " unpractical " or "visionary" when I disagreed. I realized that I was ineffective, and fretted.

* * * *

Then came Bardoli. In 1921, Gandhiji had selected the Bardoli *Taluka* as the camp from which to conduct the campaign of Non-violent Non-co-operation. Since 1925, the peasants of Bardoli and their representatives had been carrying on a campaign of futile protests and ineffective appeals against the revision of land revenue, which was, as ultimately demonstrated even by Government officials, palpably wrong. The members of the Legislative Council representing Bardoli were working hard for some relief; our party often discussed the question; but Government was adamant, and we were unable to help.

When we, the members of the Council, could give no assistance to Bardoli, it turned to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel for help. He warned them of the risks of *satyagraha*, Gandhiji himself was not quite willing to start it. But, ultimately Bardoli was insistent. Mr. Mahadeo Desai in

The Story of Bardoli has given a vivid account of that epic struggle. I am concerned here only with my personal reaction to it.

After the Sardar took charge of the Bardoli agitation it grew apace; members of the Council went to and fro, and Press agitation waxed more and more insistent. Bardoli became an all-India issue; and many members of Gujarat resigned on the Bardoli issue; I was, however, linked to the Gujarati Minister of Education, a great friend of mine, by an understanding that we should reorganize the primary education of the Province, and at first was not disposed to part company for the sake of a campaign which I thought was foredoomed to failure by its inherent weakness of non-violence.

My friend no doubt had a different outlook. He considered the movement mere bluff, the Press reports false, its leaders dishonest, and his views no doubt lent justification to the official attitude of "no surrender."

CHAPTER VI

Oh, the British Prestige

IT was May 1928. I was spending my holiday at Panchgani, when the news of the Government having employed Pathans to overawe the mild Gujarati men and women in Bardoli was splashed in the Press. I was agitated beyond words; I could not sleep. Was I—the University Member—to be the only one not to raise my voice? And why? I therefore ventured to write a letter to H. E. Sir Leslie Wilson, the Governor, on May 27, 1928, and correspondence followed, explaining how a strict constitutionalist, as I was, reacted to the situation.

The correspondence was important from more points of view than one. It indicates, for instance, how the Indian mind slowly but surely turns to Gandhiji when face to face with the hard fact of British prestige.

My contention was that, the question as to whether the wishes of the Bardoli ryots for an independent re-inquiry should be granted was an issue apart. The immediate issue was as to whether the rights of Government were to be enforced at all costs against a peaceful agitation in respect of what they considered a legitimate administrative grievance. In my letter to the Governor, I pointed out:

> The line between the strictness of law and the determined rigour of a vindictive assertion of rights is, at all times, difficult to be maintained when one of the parties, as in the case of Government, has the power to enforce. And I would expect Your Excellency's Government to

do its utmost to maintain this line. The employment of Pathans, Special Magistrates, the communal aspect which the payment of dues is made to assume, the tales of molestation which are reported, do look as if the officials are likely, maybe unwittingly, to ignore this line, even if they have not done so until now.

The Governor's reply on May 29 held out no prospect of relief.

Said the Governor, in the course of his reply :

There is no doubt, in my mind, that, in the case of Bardoli, a definite attempt is being made to coerce Government by the use of the weapon of civil disobedience and you can hardly be surprised if Government feels bound to take up such a challenge thrown down, although it is very deeply to be regretted that this means action which spells grave hardships for the unfortunate agriculturists in the *taluka*—but that is due to no fault of Government.

* * * *

There has been no vindictive assertion of rights on our part. A great deal of untruth has been stated and written about the Pathans (of whom only about 40 are employed in the whole of Bardoli *Taluka*) whom you mention. If those who are preaching and practising civil disobedience had allowed the *kheduts* and others to do their proper work, it would not have been necessary to have brought anyone in from outside; but they have not been so allowed, and have been terrorized into refusal to carry out their duties. The tales of molestation to which you allude are hopelessly exaggerated, and, in fact, it is impossible, without an inner knowledge of

what is going on, for anyone to properly appreciate the situation.

*   *   *   *

The people in Bardoli know themselves that Government have been generous, and they want to pay. They are now paying quietly, but dare not let it be known —for fear of persecution. Many people are coming forward to buy forfeited lands, and they would not do so if the assessment were so high as is made out.

*   *   *   *

The popular indignation against the employment of Pathans was rising, and I rejoined, by another letter bearing date June 1, in the course of which I said—

I must confess to a keen sense of disappointment at the decision "to see through" which judging from Your Excellency's letter, Government appear to have arrived at. It may be that the situation is not due to any fault of the Government. But after all that is not everything. This decision will result either in the elimination of the existing agriculturists in Bardoli or in bloodshed; and in either case, will result, if in nothing else, in deep and lasting embitterment. And I cannot help feeling, that this result will be too disproportionate to the issue, viz., the demand for re-inquiry.

*   *   *   *

I deeply deplore that when a little gesture of solicitude will perhaps end the matter, the Government have for the time being decided not to obtain anything but an unconditional surrender from the Bardoli people, and thus, at the instance of those for whom the penalties of Government have no dread, compel the weakest *taluka* in Gujarat to learn the lessons of civil disobedience.

Some of us in the Council who were making attempts to bring about a sympathetic understanding between Government and the party of progressive politicians in the Council regret this situation most, as their efforts will be seriously handicapped.

* * * *

No Indian constitutionalist, however determined, can look on with equanimity when for the enforcement of ordinary *japti* claims, Government employs foreign mercenaries, who in our part of the country have been more often than not associated with lawless activities.

May I draw Your Excellency's attention to the fearful implications logically involved in this act, viz.,

(*a*) That the Government with its vast resources cannot get decent Indians to work out its policy in this matter; and

(*b*) That the Government even in a small revenue matter like this is prepared to resort to such an unusual agency to carry out its policy?

These implications have a tendency to alter, as I have already submitted, the very nature of the controversy and I am afraid will exasperate public feeling so as to make it difficult for any Indian—entitled to any respect in public life—so much as to keep an open mind in the matter.

The Governor desired to explain his policy still further and sent a letter dated June 5. It carried the issue no further.

Mr. Mahadeo Desai in his record of the Bardoli struggle, while referring to this correspondence, wrote:

Among the public men who evinced an interest in the Bardoli question and tried to help the peasants'

cause, Sjt. K. M. Munshi's name deserves prominent mention. We shall have to speak at length about him in a later chapter. It is sufficient to note here that towards the end of May he addressed a number of letters to His Excellency Sir Leslie Wilson, and laid especial emphasis on the fact that he had written the letters as a strict constitutionalist and not "as a non-co-operator threatening non-payment of taxes." It was perhaps because he strictly defined his position, that he was able to draw the Governor out.

My emphasis in my correspondence with the Governor on constitutionalism as distinguished from *satyagraha* led Gandhiji to comment in *Young India* :—

And when the British lion is in a fury in British India, God help the " gentle Hindu." Well, God does help the helpless. The people of India have found in *Satyagraha* the God-given infallible *Ramabana* of self suffering. Under its stimulating influence the people are slowly waking up from the lethargy of ages. The Bardoli peasants are but showing India that, weak as they are, they have got the courage to suffer for their convictions.

It is too late in the day to call *Satyagraha* unconstitutional. It will be unconstitutional when Truth and its fellow, Self-sacrifice, become unlawful.

I wish both His Excellency the Governor and Sjt. Munshi will take note of these facts that have happened within the past fourteen years. *Satyagraha* in Bardoli cannot now be suddenly declared unconstitutional. The fact is the Government have no case. They do not want their revenue policy to be challenged at an open inquiry. If the Bardoli people can stand the final heat, they will have the open inquiry or the withdrawal of the enhancement.

On June 12, 1928, His Excellency released the correspondence that passed between us to the Press.

The letters were front-paged on every paper; they were also translated into Gujarati and distributed in the villages of Bardoli by the Government; the firm, unwavering head of the Government had spoken.

CHAPTER VII

Gandhian Alchemy

I DECIDED to visit Bardoli and see things for myself. I had also promised it to the Governor, Sir Leslie Wilson. Accordingly, I visited Bardoli on June 16, 1928.

I came away in a very agitated frame of mind. I had seen Gandhian doctrines in action. What I had looked upon as the caprices of a visionary had in them the vitality to create in his countrymen, a new strength that would hasten the pace of freedom.

For the first time, I realized the tremendous power which Gandhiji possessed of transvaluing values. He was an alchemist of life and had, above all, the unwavering self-confidence of a prophet. Because of him, Truth and Non-violence—only words of moral import till then—had come to be accepted as principles of practical statesmanship. Thick unbleached *khadi* had become the symbol of refinement and culture, and grim self-abnegation had come to characterize luxury-loving Gujarat. Intrigues had given way to fearlessness. Fastidiousness had been transformed into unflinching heroism. Effective organization had altered the basis of politics. Little Bardoli had become a byword for limitless heroism. Who can escape the effects of this alchemy?

This alchemist, not unlike the ancient sage Dadhichi, knew the art of forging thunderbolts out of bones. Our cowardice and unsteadiness, our helplessness and fatalism, passing through the fire of his discipline came out as *satyagraha*. The underlying logic was peculiar to the man.

He argued :

True, we have no arms. Equally true it is that, in order to achieve our objective we cannot kill our opponent. But surely we can die to secure it.

"Someone" tries to get us to do a thing by force; we refuse to do it; and he kills us. Who is the conqueror?

He or we?

Most certainly, we!

We are the conquerors, for he could not get us to do what he wanted.

It was a curious outlook but a sound one.

To make a solemn resolution, to adhere to it with Truth and Non-violence, to carry it out with unflinching determination, to die but not to yield : these were some of the simple lessons which he taught, victory and death both being revalued in them.

In them lay the power to conquer fear.

It is, in this perspective, that I looked at Bardoli. The beginning of the struggle had a dramatic element in it.

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel taught the people, the Mahatma's *mantra* of "Conquest of Death." He preached :—

Do not swerve from the path of non-violence.

Resolve solemnly not to pay a pie to Government by way of revenue.

Let them levy distress on your lands, even forfeit them if they will.

Let them, if they so desire, put up your lands to auction.

Tell Government : "You can do what you like, but only by force; you shall not get us to agree to what we do not like."

The Sardar was not content with this.

He went on :

If I were a peasant, I would say, "Cut me to pieces but I will not pay."

Day after day, he gave them such advice. "We are ready to die; kill us; but you shall not recover the revised revenue."

The Sardar, under the inspiration of his master, gave new values to old beliefs. All his life, the peasant had slaved at his land, paying land revenue, and living under the fond delusion that the land was his. But someone had now risen who would reassess the values of his life altogether.

The Sardar preached: "Tillers of the soil are not the dependents of Government; it is Government that subsists on them. All fiats of authority need not be accepted by the people; it is Government which flourishes on popular *will*. Better to die than to pay land revenue."

And every village in Bardoli swore by all it held sacred that it would suffer extinction rather than pay this unjust levy of land revenue.

The Sardar had unique experience of civic and public life, of the bloody riots of Ahmedabad, of the non-violent struggle of Nagpur, of political manœuvres and the Non-co-operation of Gandhiji. A seasoned warrior, he knew the

weakness of the officials as well as the strength of the people. He could make men dance to his tune. His steel had passed through the fire of the alchemist and come out with a finer edge. He had the great general's discerning eye for the true and the loyal, for the enemy, for the traitor and the obstructionist. The art of managing men he knew, and knew well. But much as he loved to concentrate power in his hands, he invariably submitted to Gandhiji's wishes.

Under his direction, the leaders of Gujarat trained in the school of Gandhiji assumed the charge of various positions in accordance with their experience and calibre. He stamped out difference of opinion, discussions and rivalries among them. Different *ashrams* were converted into camps, the workers became leaders. The word of the Sardar became the *gospel* of Bardoli.

In India, public life hitherto had consisted of a struggle for power and a scramble for publicity. Unorganized liberty of action was understood to mean democracy. But the alchemist had changed all these values. He had taught India that the word of the leader was the law; that everyone should discharge his duty in his proper field of action. No nation could exist without organization. No Government was possible against organized effort. Without it, successful opposition against organized power was equally impossible.

The Sardar moved from village to village, and thousands listened to his message with fond devotion. He alone spoke in Bardoli and indeed he could speak. Stern self-control characterizes Gandhiji's soft speech which turns away wrath; truth and sweet reasonableness are its normal conditions. But the eloquence of his disciple has intensely human elements. He can be truculent. He can attack well

and effectively when the need arises. He can demolish or denounce by a withering phrase or a picturesque simile. He can move his audience to laughter or tears by using idioms which go straight to the heart of villagers. The varying use of linguistic and rhetorical wealth, the ability to deal sledge-hammer blows to opponents, the skill to touch the hearts of men or inspire them to action, made Sardar Vallabhbhai's addresses to the Bardoli peasants, the high-water mark of eloquence.

His sarcasm and humour were effective, fearful for the opponent, heartening to his own people. He kept up the morale of the peasants by cracking jokes at the expense of their opponents. The buffaloes of the villagers, loved by them as much as the members of their family, were attached and auctioned off every day by raiding officials. Their womenfolk shed tears at their beloved cattle being thus taken away and lost to them for ever. But Sardar Vallabhbhai knew how to dry these tears. He dubbed the Commissioner who had ordered the attachment "the buffalo-tiger." In Gujarati an insect is known as "a tiger of flies," but to call a European officer a "tiger of buffaloes" was a thoroughly enjoyable joke. Everyone laughed at this joke; fear disappeared; the opponent was covered with withering ridicule.

Again, hundreds of buffaloes were locked up in the houses by villagers lest they might be distrained. Closely guarded and deprived of light and exercise, the buffaloes had turned whitish. The villagers were sad at this discoloration; but the Sardar was equal to the occasion. "The white Commissioner did not like a black buffalo, so he converted her into a *madamdi* (a diminutive of 'madam' used for European ladies in Indian languages)!"

The joke spread to every village and was on every tongue. "The saheb turned the buffalo into *madamdi.*" These terrible poison-tipped shafts rarely missed their mark. They went round the villages, day after day, and the afflicted forgot their miseries and escaped demoralization.

Then the might of the Empire was sought to be directed against Bardoli. None had defied the official's orders so far and none could defy them now. That was how the world had been mastered, and the guns and armoured cars were ready to be used once again if necessary. Should Desais and Patels be now allowed to rule in the place of Smiths and Robinsons? Officials who never could understand new values or gauge the skill of the alchemist fell upon Bardoli.

The issue was small. The people had only resolved not to pay the excess revenue imposed by the new revision, and officialdom was ready to fight that resolution. The peasant who paid the revised revenue lived in peace; his land remained in his possession and high officials offered him their hospitality. But whoever stuck to the resolution was the enemy of Government, to be hunted down mercilessly. On the one hand were peace, security and comfort; on the other, only the resolution not to sell freedom for a mess of pottage, to suffer and endure even unto death and ruin. Have these peasants gone mad, asked the officials, that they should sacrifice their all for a word plighted to pestilential agitators? And the Commissioner had characterized them as "a swarm of agitators living on the people of Bardoli."

But Bardoli had acquired new values. It was not afraid of jails, fines or poverty. "Better to go to jail than break the plighted word," it said. Sardar Vallabhbhai challenged

the authorities every day. "I defy all laws imposing restraints on speech. Arrest me, if you dare." Young men echoed him. No sooner was one arrested than another and yet a third took his place. Fifty young men were ready for arrest. They were impatient, waiting for handcuffs day after day. Even the Hindu wife's traditional devotion underwent a change. "Rather go to jail than break your word. I will look after our children while you are away," said she. The women were as determined as the men to court jail.

CHAPTER VIII

HEROES, OUT OF CLAY

THUS I saw popular heroism defying unbridled repression, and my soul rose in revolt against my inaction. Why did I not resign my seat on the Council? Was it the unconscious lure of some official favour with which to satisfy my conceit? Or was it the fear of personal sufferings which association with Gandhiji implied? Was I justified in standing aloof from this heroic struggle? I hated myself for these conflicting emotions, threw mere prudence to the winds and decided to resign.

I had promised the Governor to let him know the actual conditions in Bardoli and I kept my promise. That letter dated June 17, 1928, in which I indicted the Government also contained my resignation from the Council.

The letter is of importance. It is the tale of my conversion to the Gandhian faith. I began, resisting Gandhian values. The realization that bureaucratic prestige overrode human values, which the Bardoli struggle demonstrated, came as an eye-opener to me. The transformation of the Bardoli peasant into a *satyagrahi* held promise of a new heaven and a new earth. I decided to enter the new Life.

My letter to the Governor, on what I saw at Bardoli, is self-explanatory.

It explains the process of transformation which has come over all India under the Gandhian touch, over a period of twenty years, 1919—1939, the first phase of the Gandhian era.

I wrote to the Governor :—

I am addressing this letter as a matter of painful duty, because I had always thought that Your Excellency's intervention in the Bardoli matters, which some of us were seeking, would result in satisfactorily relieving the situation there.

As Your Excellency knows, I would be the last to assist any movement which threatens the existence of constitutional government ; but in my humble opinion no Government in its fight even against Civil Disobedience is entitled to refuse to redress the legitimate grievances of the people ; to ignore the hardships which innocent victims of the fight have to undergo; to adopt against them harsh and unjustifiable methods; or to assume a vindictive attitude. If it does so, a constitutionalist, however determined he may be, is bound to be driven to the sad necessity of adopting an emphatic mode of expressing his protest.

In the matter of Bardoli assessment from the commencement all that the Gujarat members of the Council wanted was an independent official re-inquiry. A request for re-inquiry is by far the mildest form of demand, which the mildest of men can formulate and the least mild of Governments can easily grant. In a case where, as in the case of Bardoli, a report is based on figures which are obviously inaccurate, the most autocratic Government would have been expected to meet this demand as a matter of course. The refusal of this demand has been the cause of this unfortunate trouble.

It may be that the revised assessment may in the end be proved not to be unfair. But even if the assessment has been proper, the fact remains that Your Excellency's

Government has adopted an attitude not consonant with any responsible form of civilized government. They have declined a re-inquiry though pressed upon by every person concerned. Satisfied with their own self-conscious generosity, they have refused an opportunity of allowing their own decision to be recognized as just ; and rather than yield pursued a course which will end in the elimination of the existing agriculturists in Bardoli or in bloodshed, and certainly in widespread disaffection and misery. That such a small issue, viz., the demand for re-inquiry, should be permitted to have such a disproportionate result is, to say the least, only possible in the case of a people so helpless and of a Government so powerful as in India.

From personal investigation I am satisfied that those who are leading the movement in Bardoli are scrupulously averse to importing any political significance into their activities—unless Government drives them to do so. In this case, so far, not even the staunchest non-co-operator has demanded anything but an independent inquiry with an opportunity to the people of the *taluka* to test Government figures and submit their own. The demand is for being allowed to co-operate in such an inquiry and cannot be considered as anything anti-Government or pro-Non-co-operation. But in this case Government appears to me to be desirous only to crush the non-co-operators who are organizing the spirit of protest in Bardoli and do not care whether in such a process a few thousand families are crushed out of existence.

It is time that Government came to recognize that as an extreme measure of protest Civil Disobedience—which panic-mongers describe as a seditious movement

—has come to stay in the public life of India; that some of the leaders of the movement—however undesirable they may be considered—are the best brains and the noblest souls in this country ; and that neither fear nor favour is likely to swerve them from their self-laid path of duty. Under these circumstances it would be wise for Government that they should attempt to inspire people with a confidence in their sense of justice rather than attempt to overawe them by a show or exercise of coercive might.

The cheap sneers of lofty bureaucrats, the extraordinarily severe sentence for technical offences, the thunders of arrogant proclamations and the official sabre-rattling have ceased to excite anything but ridicule, and it is really regrettable that the Government of this Presidency which knew better methods in the highest days of Non-co-operation should have permitted itself these obsolete methods, which are not likely to bring credit to Government nor to inspire feelings of loyalty in the people.

As I already wrote to Your Excellency, at the instance of those for whom the penalties of Government have no dread, your Government is compelling the weakest *taluka* in Gujarat to learn the lessons of Civil Disobedience. Official reports have prevented Your Excellency and Your Excellency's Government, I am afraid, from clearly realizing the situation there.

In a large *taluka* like Bardoli, with 130 villages and 126,000 acres of arable land, 69 out of 90 *patels* and 11 out of 35 *talatis* have resigned.

There, 80,000 men, women and children are inspired by a determined spirit of organized opposition.

Your *japti* officer has to travel miles before he can get a shave.

Your officer's car which got stuck would have remained in the mud but for Mr. Vallabhbhai, the officially styled agitator.

Sardar Garda, to whom land worth thousands have been sold for a nominal amount, does not get even a scavenger for his house.

The Collector gets no conveyance on the railway station unless one is given by Mr. Vallabhbhai's sanction.

In a few villages which I visited, not a man, or woman, was either sorry for the attitude or shaken in the faith which he or she had adopted. And as Mr. Vallabhbhai passed through village after village, I saw men, women and children coming out with spontaneous homage ; I saw illiterate women, old and young, in their tatters painting his forehead with the mark of victory ; laying at his feet, for their sacred cause, their hard-earned rupee or two and singing in their rustic accents songs of the " misdeeds of the hapless Government."

And I had to confess to myself that the official reports of an artificial agitation forced on unwilling people are, to put it very mildly, grossly inaccurate. Men laugh at your Government's attempts at terrorisation. They have borne well, and are prepared to brave more. The most polite form in which they refer to Mr. Smart is " a tiger with a voracious appetite for buffaloes " ; and the *japti* officer as a " Chota Commissioner." I dare not put on paper the most modest phrase which they reserve for that enterprising and ambitious Mr. Almaula who I wish, even in the interests of Government, would

be as sober as he is zealous. I am writing this in the hope that personal experience of men like myself may at least awaken in Your Excellency and the members of your Government a desire to make personal investigation. Spirit such as this, it would be unwise even for the British Government to attempt to deride or to crush.

You may reduce 80,000 such determined men, women and children to starvation ; you may if you like shoot them ; but in these parts the prestige of Government for which so much is being said and done does not exist. Prestige is not a thing which could be commanded but has always to be deserved and earned.

CHAPTER IX

The Issue

CONTINUING my letter to the Governor, I proceeded to clarify the issue which the Bardoli struggle raised. To my mind, the *issue* remains unaltered, throughout the many changing phases of the Gandhian movement. The bureaucracy, like the Bourbons, learn nothing, unlearn nothing, which furnishes the clue to the ever-recurring Indian deadlock.

My letter continued—

> But the issue in Bardoli has, in my opinion, changed. The issue is no longer merely whether an independent re-inquiry should be granted but whether the officials should be allowed to pursue their policy of vindictive enforcement of revenue claims at all costs. The *japti* claims are more in the nature of civil rights, and one would have expected that the process of enforcing them would proceed with the dignity and the conscientiousness of judicial executions. But I regret to have to say that Mr. Smart or whichever official was responsible for it, has taken upon himself the role of a vindictive victor determined to spread the greatest measure of woe, and has only been prevented from carrying out his wishes by a stubborn and organized and, in view of the provocation given, highly self-controlled resistance offered by the people.
>
> For a total assessment of about Rs. 700 one Veerchand has had lands of the value of between Rs. 30,000 and Rs. 40,000 forfeited.

Another lot of 33 acres—any day worth about Rs. 15,000 if not more—belonging to another, was sold for Rs. 161. As if this was not enough, his cooking utensils were attached for Rs. 65, his pair of horses were sold for a nominal sum to a Khandesh Mahomedan and his nephew is being criminally prosecuted for an alleged false declaration.

Cotton worth Rs. 250 was sold for Rs. 21.

For failure to pay Rs. 360, Dorabji had liquor worth about Rs. 2,000 attached and his shop closed. Further attachment followed. Considerable part of the liquor was spilt and lost to the owner, the balance sold for an insignificant amount. And yet out of Rs. 315, Rs. 114-8-6 were still shown as the balance and his lands, said to be worth Rs. 30,000, were forfeited to satisfy this balance.

Cotton purchased and paid for by a ginning factory is forfeited and its sale is threatened on account of the agriculturists who have already been paid off by the factory.

These are but a few instances which I could look into for myself. Innumerable instances of this kind I am prepared to prove before any tribunal.

But this was not enough. Any forfeiture of lands, however valuable, was considered insufficient to overawe the people, and a campaign was inaugurated against buffaloes, a campaign which has earned for Mr. Smart the derisive epithet of a "Buffalo-Tiger." The *japti* officer's fascination for buffaloes appears to have been extraordinary.

Buffaloes were attached without any inquiry as to their owners. Sometimes buffaloes of non-*khatedars* were attached, and restored only on payment for

detention. Buffaloes belonging to the subjects of Baroda State were attached. A buffalo in the *thana* died for want of care. Another was cruelly beaten to a state of collapse.

Many of the attachments, I heard, were irregular. Very often proper *panchanamas* were not made. No accounts of the property attached have been rendered. Attachments have been levied on exempted articles. I pass over numerous cases of attachments of all sorts of articles, which were sold for a ridiculously low price.

And in order to carry out attachments of buffaloes with due solemnity and terror, the ingenious device of calling in the Pathans was adopted. Thanks to Your Excellency they are gone now. But that any Government enforcing civil claims should do it with the assistance of a class notorious for its lawless activity is a thing unheard of.

Did anyone in Government consider the moral effect of a *japti* officer, standing before a closed house and asking the Pathan to jump over the hedge or to scale a wall, with instructions to forcibly open the door if it was not open, or to forcibly take possession of any article in the house?

The implications, as I stated before in my letter to Your Excellency, in the employment of Pathans were clear, viz.,

(*a*) that the Government with its vast resources could not get decent Indians to work out its policy in this matter, and

(*b*) that Government in a small revenue matter like this was prepared to resort to such an unusual agency to carry out its policy.

The Pathan terrorism did not succeed in its objective and the Government got all the discredit for having employed them. And what has been the outcome of these methods?

There are 17,000 *khatedars* concerned in this matter. They and their families go to make about 40,000 souls. They, between them, have at least about 40,000 buffaloes which are loved by their owners with an affection, the strength of which can only be appreciated by a born agriculturist. In order to save their beloved cattle, 40,000 men, women and children with these cattle have locked themselves up in small and insanitary houses for over three months. As I passed through villages, silent, empty and deserted, with sentinels posted at different ends; as I saw women peeping through the barred window to see whether it was the arrival of the *japti* officer; as on being reassured the doors were opened and I was taken inside; as I saw the darkness, the stench, the filth, and the men, women and children who had herded for months in the same room with their beloved cattle, miserable, ulcerated, grown whitish by disease; and as I heard their determination to remain in that condition for months rather than abandon their cattle to the tender mercies of the *japti* officer, I could not help thinking that the imagination which conceived the dire *japti* methods, the severity which had enforced them and the policy which had sanctioned them, were difficult to be found outside the pages of a history of mediæval times.

I grieve to say that I learnt the working of the administration of criminal law in these parts with a heavy heart: That the machinery of criminal law should have

been brought in to assist in the *japti* campaign is an extraordinary feature.

Nineteen men have so far been given varying sentences most of which, to a man accustomed to the ordinary administration of criminal law, would appear frightful. As for the evidence on which these sentences are based, the less said the better.

A boy was sitting under a tree on a public road at a distance from the compound of the bungalow where the Collector had temporarily put up.

The bungalow itself is so far away from the spot that the boy could not see what was passing inside the bungalow, and yet for the high crime and misdemeanour of sitting opposite a public officer's compound to watch the persons who were going in and out, three boys were sentenced each to two months' simple imprisonment or in lieu thereof 50 rupees fine.

Though one of the boys is in jail, within a few days, a buffalo, a calf and a cart belonging to the father of the boy was attached for realizing the fine of Rs. 50 !

An old and respected leader of Sarbhon forwarded a copy of the resolution passed by the villagers not to pay assessment to a *nazar* who happened to be the guardian of a ward, owning land in the *taluka*.

I heard that notice has been issued against this man for committing an offence under section 189 of the Penal Code !

Sir, I never gave credence to the stories which were reported till I went to the spot myself and made inquiries personally.

I have no hesitation in expressing my view that the methods adopted at Bardoli are not worthy of a Government with any pretensions to civilization.

Apart from the issue of the assessment, these methods have raised another issue. Whether the assessment question is solved or not, it is impossible for anyone with the least notion of dignity or freedom to look on with indifference, when methods such as these are adopted to overawe people whose only crime has been a persistent clamour for the redress of an administrative grievance. Your Excellency and apparently your Government have, with the usual confidence in the man on the spot, declined to believe these reports.

With even the few materials at my disposal I am prepared to prove the facts which I set out above. And, whatever may happen to the question of the Bardoli assessment, methods of this character require to be investigated and exposed.

As citizens of the British Empire, Indians have, with others, the right to see that even law and order are enforced in a lawful and orderly manner.

I am afraid it would be too much to ask Your Excellency's Government to investigate into these methods ; but I and others who represent the people of this Presidency cannot look on with equanimity without examining these methods.

I propose to write to a few members of the Legislative Council to assist me in an examination of the methods adopted, and from the little I saw, I can assure Your Excellency that the scrutiny will disclose facts which neither as a British statesman nor as a gentleman, you will be inclined either to justify or exculpate.

CHAPTER X

AN INDICTMENT

MY letter to the Governor continued :

Your Excellency has been pleased to ask the assistance of constitutionalists in their fight against Civil Disobedience. The constitutionalists in the Legislative Council, for the sake of their own principles, supported Government up to a point; but permit me to point out that Your Excellency's Government has perfected the policy of a "compartmental" control of the Legislative Council; and with the assistance of the non-politically-minded compartments have reduced the politically-minded compartments to a hopeless impotence. In all matters, as in this revenue matter, the opinion of the politically-minded groups has been disregarded, their remonstrances ignored, their appeals spurned. Safe in its compartmental control of the Council, your Government have come to believe that to outvote popular groups is to stabilize Government.

May I ask what has been the career of the controversy of the revenue assessment? The Joint Parliamentary Committee proposed that the main principles by which land revenue is determined, should be brought under the control of the Legislative Council. In 1924, the Legislative Council, by a majority, resolved that new assessment should not be levied till such a legislation has been brought into effect. In 1927, the Council again resolved not to collect the enhanced assessment pending such legislation. The Revenue Assessment Committee

proposed an advisory committee of the Legislative Council. And yet when the Hon. Members of the Council for the Surat District, my friends Rao Bahadur Naik and Mr. Shivdasani, concentrated their attack on Mr. Anderson's transparently inaccurate report, their complaints were dismissed with a lofty contempt. Their private entreaties failed. By a sheer accident we could get a few minutes to discuss Bardoli in the Budget debate and all that we got in return was the garrulous levity of the Settlement Officer, whose boasted accuracy has become the laughing-stock of the Presidency. We went to vote, and your Government with their usual skill in compartmental control succeeded for the time being in showing to the world that the politically-minded constitutionalists in the Council did not represent the view of the Council or the Presidency. The vote so obtained has become so conveniently sacred that Government which defied the old resolutions when they represented popular opinion, now cannot so much as forget it, and even Lord Winterton has learnt to swear by it. And now when the Bardoli people have tenaciously launched a campaign of Civil Disobedience, when they are proving that our attitude in the Council was not only right, but representative, backed by an overwhelming opinion in the Presidency, when they have exploded the hollowness of the vote which your Government manœuvred in securing in the Council, when as a result of their activity your Government will have to grant more than what we in our wildest moments in last February dreamt of obtaining from your Government, it will be less than human if in this struggle our sympathy or confidence can remain with your Government. If to-day in this struggle, no constitutionalist worth the name can stand by your Government, the policy of your

Government which has considered the politically-minded groups in the Council as a nuisance to be suffered and outvoted is alone responsible for it.

What Rao Bahadur Naik wanted in February last, what he and Rao Saheb Dadubhai demanded in May last, if given then, would have been hailed with delight and made us feel that Government was ours; if what was demanded then was offered or given now, it would be rejected with scorn and contempt, by persons who have outgrown the methods which we tried; and whether your Government now concedes or coerces, it is not as a Government which is either genuinely sympathetic, or which we can by any stretch of imagination call ours.

Sir, I approached you on Sunday last in the earnest hope that at least the repressive measures would be suspended and an impartial inquiry ordered. My hopes do not appear to have been well-founded. I learnt at Bardoli that over 280 armed police were going to be drafted at Bardoli. Four Special Magistrates and Mr. Healy as a Special Superintendent are henceforth to control the destinies of the Bardoli people. In view of this attitude and in view of the circumstances I found at Bardoli, I would be untrue to the position of a representative of the graduates in the Presidency, if I did not invite them to give me a mandate on the following issues:

(*a*) Whether the Bardoli people are not entitled to an independent and open re-inquiry.

(*b*) Whether pending such inquiry recovery of enhanced assessment should not be suspended.

(*c*) Whether Government is justified in the methods it has adopted in recovering *japti* claims.

In pre-Morley-Minto Government, Sir Gokuldas Parekh, a member of the then Legislative Council, could get an open inquiry into the revenue matters. In pre-Reform Government with one Indian member and with Morley-Minto Council, Kaira was dealt with sympathetically in spite of Civil Disobedience.

In a cabinet with five Indians and a "responsible" Government, we are helpless. The Bombay Legislative Council is a representative institution where the voice of the representatives of the majority of people is invariably derided and overridden. Your Excellency and Earl Winterton both relied upon the vote of this Legislative Council; and the only reply which lies in my power is to resign my seat in the Council and to appeal to my Presidency-wide constituency to indicate their verdict on these issues. It is but just that in these extraordinary circumstances, I should only represent a constituency which appreciates the woes of Bardoli with the same intensity as I do.

In closing, I may thankfully note the extreme courtesy and sympathy which you have always exhibited towards Bardoli as well as to those like me who tried to represent its cause. But in a system of government like ours, which is neither national nor personal, sympathy even of the Head of Government is as ineffective as the wishes of the people.

"This letter," says Mahadeo Desai, "sent a thrill through the hearts of all who had any fellow-feeling for their compatriots and placed the Bardoli question in the forefront of all questions engaging public attention."

CHAPTER XI

A Drain, No Rent

THE resignation of several members from the Legislative Council gave strength to the public resentment against repression in Bardoli. Rao Bahadur Bhimbhai Naik, member for Surat, Dr. M. D. D. Gilder (the Minister of Public Health in the Bombay Congress Ministry, July 1937 to October 1939), Mr. Husseinbhoy Lalji (now member of the Central Assembly), Mr. Shivdasani and Mr. Chandrachud, with Mr. B. G. Kher (the Bombay Congress Premier, July 1937 to October 1939) as Secretary and myself as Chairman, formed themselves into a committee to inquire into the coercive measures adopted by the Government. When the Committee first went to Bardoli, we were told that we would be arrested on our way. After a hurried discussion among ourselves we decided to face arrest if it came. We were already in the crucible of the alchemist.

Week after week the Committee visited Bardoli, examined witnesses and collected evidence of the manner in which the coercive powers under the Land Revenue Code were used. Our presence in Bardoli had a very salutary effect, and the processes came to be less rigorous.

The work of the Committee gave me an opportunity to study the land revenue policy of British rule which held the people in bondage. It was embodied in the Bombay Land Revenue Code and the Revenue Jurisdiction Act. Its principal feature was to impose the rule not of law, not of well-defined statutory rights and obligations, but of the

District Officer's discretion. It was limited by the officer's knowledge of the district and coloured by his prejudices and passions; a discretion which more often than not was sure of being approved by people at the head of the Executive, who, if an emergency arose, would be backed up by the vaunted might of the British Empire.

As recently as 1875, it was laid down by the Bombay High Court that according to Hindu law the sovereign was not entitled to any proprietary rights in the land. The Mahomedan rulers never claimed it. In 1819, Elphinstone found that the ryots were the proprietors of the soil. But the East India Company was not satisfied with this position. Its pet theory, put forward by an English lawyer, was that by ancient usage the land belonged to Government and the tenant was only entitled to his wages and subsistence. Then followed a conflict between experts, some of whom maintained that the State was the landlord and revenue was rent, while others maintained that the tenant was the landlord and revenue was only a tax. However, the official point of view, often exploded in theory yet universally followed in practice, was that the State was the landlord and revenue was not a tax but rent. As a result, revision survey settlements were held every 30 years with a view to "revise the rent," a polite phrase for increasing the rent. In theory, rent would imply that the tenants cultivated the land because it paid them to do so, but in fact, the cultivator had to cultivate even at a loss, for the only other alternative for him was starvation. And yet the assessment kept on rising.

In 1879, Sir William Hunter stated : "The fundamental difficulty of bringing relief to the Deccan peasantry is that the Government assessment does not leave enough food

to the cultivator to support himself and his family throughout the year."

In 1900, Vaughan Nash characterized the process of assessment in these words : "Government first fixes the standard of living and cultivation and then proceeds to drain off all winnings of the people which rise above the mark which has been fixed."

And the result was aptly described by the Famine Commission in 1901 as follows: "In good years he has nothing to hope for except a bare subsistence; in bad years, he falls back on public charity."

In the same year, Mr. Romesh Chandra Dutt, one of the greatest Indian economists, said:

> All equitable and intelligent limits to the land tax, proposed from time to time, have thus been ignored or rejected; and the present system is well calculated to keep the Bombay cultivator permanently resourceless as any system that the wit of man could devise.

In 1904 the Director-General of Statistics made a despondent note as follows:

> It is doubtful whether the efforts now being made to take the cultivator out of the hands of the moneylenders will have much effect; or even if they have the fullest effect, they will materially improve the cultivator's position until a large share of the produce of the soil is left in his hands, and he is protected against enhanced assessment by Government officials and against enhanced rent by private landlords.

CHAPTER XII

A Soulless Law

THERE were no definite canons in the Land Revenue Code defining the method of assessment. The canons of assessment as laid down in the Settlement Manual and as interpreted by the Settlement Officers were so conflicting and varying that the Settlement Manual itself had to confess that "the final decision of the Settlement Officer depends not upon the formal working out of results based on theory but rather upon the *subjective impression* of local knowledge and experience."

This was nothing else but leaving the assessment to the discretion—the individual impressions—of the Settlement Officer. The Bombay Settlement Officer was not prepared to content himself with the basis applied to other countries for levying the land tax. Neither the capital value, nor the unimproved or public value, nor the net produce, nor the annual value, nor the net income of the farmer was the basis on which he proposed to found the Land Revenue laws. His wisdom, full and unfettered, was the only law.

The result was often ridiculous. Taking the instance of Bardoli, the Collector fixed the assessment according to his individual discretion. It was overhauled by the Settlement Officer whose discretion was based on expert knowledge and a life's experience. His assessment was revised by an expert officer, the then Revenue Member. It was dubbed "just and generous" by H. E. Sir Leslie Wilson. Two members of the Civil Service, Mr. R. S. Broomfield (now a Judge of the Bombay High Court) and Sir Reginald

(then Mr.) Maxwell (now the Home Member of the Government of India), when later they sat on the Bardoli Committee, decided that these assessments were wrong. The Hon'ble Sir Louis Rieu, the then Revenue Member, was not prepared to accept the principles which Messrs. Broomfield and Maxwell laid down. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and many other competent critics considered even the Broomfield Report unsatisfactory in certain respects. What can one say of the provisions of a Code which permits the fates of millions to be decided by individuals in such a divergent fashion?

Luckily the Bardoli struggle had exposed the extreme danger which lay in leaving such an important matter to the discretion of a Revenue Officer. In such a matter even the Code did not provide for any tribunal which could decide matters at issue openly and in accordance with well-recognized principles. This state of things engendered a feeling of discontent which became articulate in the Bardoli movement in a pronounced manner; and so long as the agriculturists did not feel that in this vital matter justice was done to them in an open manner by rule of law, the agrarian discontent would continue unabated. Well-defined principles and open discussion before a tribunal and an appeal to the highest Court in the Presidency were the only means of eradicating this deep-rooted conviction in the ryots that the assessment was made arbitrarily only with a view to exact the highest possible revenue from them.

The Land Revenue Code did not rest content by leaving the cultivators to the tender mercy of the Revenue Officer only in matters of assessment. The processes of the recovery of land revenue under the Code were drastic and oppressive, and placed in the hands of the Collector far-reaching powers which no civilized public could tolerate. Having

fixed the settlement to his entire satisfaction, the District Officer would put into operation the processes of recovery. Revenue was a paramount charge on the soil and crops, and was recoverable from the holder as well as the person in possession. It had priority over all mortgages, attachments and other claims. It could be recovered by the District Officer by restraining the reaping of crops, by removal of crops or by placing a watchman at the holder's expense. He could pass such an order against the whole body of landholders and the breach could be penalized by him by a summary inquiry. He could attach land and enter into management of it. He could impose a penalty or interest. He could recover the land revenue by giving a written notice, by forfeiture and disposal of land, by the distraint and sale of the defaulter's movable or immovable property, by the arrest and imprisonment of the defaulter. Mercifully, decapitation had not been authorized!

All these processes, the Collector could enforce simultaneously. He could, as in fact he did in Bardoli, enforce the process of forfeiture of land worth lakhs for recovering revenue of a few hundred rupees. Having forfeited the land at his discretion he could dispose of it, that is, enter the whole land as unoccupied and give it to anyone he liked on such terms as he thought proper. In some cases this was done subject to the sanction of Government, which meant only an old Civilian patting the back of a young one. Even the cooking vessels, beds, things which were exempted from attachment by civil law, could only escape attachment, if in the Collector's decision, the property was so "entitled to exemption." And the Collector's decision, said this wonderful law, "shall be conclusive."

The Land Revenue Code, therefore, was a piece of legislation which camouflaged the central fact that the

Executive Government as represented by the wisdom of the District Officer was the supreme landlord of all land; could impose the assessment which his *subjective impression* thought proper; and in respect of the revenue claims, was the sole plaintiff, the sole judge, the sole judgment-creditor, the paramount mortgagee, the executing court and the sheriff in charge of execution; the only party to determine what processes of execution to enforce; and the only judge to determine whether he had properly and justly enforced his own powers. All the rights of the landholders were qualified, limited, hedged in till the only privilege left to them was the privilege of unconditional and mute surrender to the Collector.

This was the true situation created by the Land Revenue Code. Its reform was overdue. The spirit behind this policy was born amidst the still unforgotten traditions of temporary conquests and transient *chauth*-collecting raids. It had aggravated agricultural indebtedness; it had rendered peasants helpless; it had made petty officials arbiters of a nation's well-being; it had created grotesque notions of official importance in the nation's life; it had created little Moghuls with wider powers than those even the Great Moghul himself enjoyed. And the little Moghuls kept India safe for the British. The peasants of Bardoli were only making an effort to exorcise this spirit.

CHAPTER XIII

Triumph of Bardoli

As a result of the inquiries, the unofficial Bardoli Committee, over which I presided, found ample evidence to support the charges I had made in my letter. In many cases the processes were illegal.

Land of the value of Rs. 3,00,000 was disposed of for Rs. 11,000. In the course of the recovery houses were broken open and irregular distraint had been levied without inquiry.

Pathans employed by the Government were guilty of indecent and improper behaviour.

Criminal law was brought to assist the recovery.

Wholesale forfeiture, sales at gross undervalue, disregard of procedure in cases of forfeiture, distraints and sales, the employment of Pathans, harsh treatment of cattle and their sales to butchers, posting of Pathans and police in front of the houses of *khatedars* for hours together, all these processes were employed to punish those whom Government considered to have usurped their authority and to overawe those who had accepted the lead of the so-called usurpers.

On July 8, the Coalition Nationalist Party in the Legislative Council, of which I was the Secretary, withdrew its support from its two Ministers. Events moved fast because the Legislative Council was meeting in a few days. Rumour had it that the situation portrayed in my

letter to the Governor had evoked the wrath of Lord Birkenhead who was reported to have favoured the use of the military in suppressing, what appeared to him to be a revolution.

On July 18, 1928, the Governor went to Surat, and offered terms, which the Sardar promptly rejected. Then our party met at Poona at my residence, on the 22nd. The days which followed were for me days of strain and worry. We all ran round and round trying to find some way out of the impasse.

Some of my colleagues were more concerned with securing a settlement at all costs. They cursed Sardar Vallabhbhai for what they termed his obstinacy.

The Minister of Education, in spite of three generations of friendship between us, broke with me, upbraiding me for "betraying" him, against anything which might have looked like a defeat of the Government.

I also incurred the wrath of many members of my party for having placed myself unreservedly at the disposal of Bardoli.

Military occupation of Bardoli was freely talked about.

Gandhiji and some all-India leaders had expressed a desire to come to Bardoli, and a revenue dispute was fast being converted into a national struggle of the first magnitude.

But the Finance Member, Sir Chunilal V. Mehta, and Sheth Lalji Naranji, the President of our party, were unflinching in their efforts for a settlement and in consultation with them, I left for Bardoli to get the minimum terms on which the Sardar would settle. The Sardar directed me to Gandhiji at Sabarmati *Ashram*, to which I went.

It offered a refreshing contrast to the stifling atmosphere of the lobbies of the Legislative Council at Poona, full of intrigue and trepidation.

There, Gandhiji gave his terms to me.

They ran as follows:

(*a*) Pending the inquiry, old assessment to be accepted.

(*b*) *Satyagrahis* will call off the campaign simultaneously the pronouncement is made about the inquiry.

(*c*) An open judicial inquiry within the terms of the Land Revenue Code by a judicial officer alone or assisted by a revenue officer with terms of reference as given below and under which the people will have a right to lead and test evidence with the help of counsel, if necessary.

Terms of Reference

First, to inquire into and report upon the complaint of the people of Bardoli and Valod,

(*a*) that the enhancement of revenue recently made is unwarranted in terms of the Revenue Code ;

(*b*) that the Reports and Notifications accessible to the public do not contain sufficient data warranting the enhancement and that some of the data given are wrong ; and

(*c*) to find, if the people's complaint is held to be justified, what enhancement or reduction there should be, upon the old assessment.

Secondly, to report upon the allegations made by or on behalf of the people about the coercive measures

adopted by the Government in order to collect the enhanced revenue.

(*d*) All land to be restored.

(*e*) Prisoners to be released.

(*f*) All *talatis* and *patels* to be reinstated.

(*g*) Valod liquor shopkeepers to be compensated.

During the discussion, Gandhiji was pleased to give me to understand that he would be willing to give up an inquiry into the coercive measures, if that alone stood in the way of the settlement.

For the first time in this struggle, I met a man who, fearless and clear-sighted, struggled with the British Government for the souls of men. If the Governor did not accept the terms, well, we should go on. Then I told him of the fears of some of my colleagues in the Council.

He laughed : "Why don't they stand aside?"

I left him with a feeling that with him to lead, India would no longer be bound.

I then went to Bardoli and discussed matters with the Sardar.

On my way back to Poona, to a Press reporter's question I gave a reply : "*Bardoli will face bullets if necessary.*"

On my return to Poona, I met H. E. the Governor with Gandhiji's terms, but he rejected them.

The result was that at a party meeting in the evening, a storm burst over my head.

The influence which was working against Bardoli had worked well in my absence.

I was upbraided as a traitor ; as a mouthpiece of Gandhiji, not a responsible member of the Legislature.

My interview to the Press was considered as having drawn a red-herring across the path of peace.

I offered to resign from the party, but refused to yield, and left Poona.

The next day, some of the members made an attempt to induce the Sardar to accept the terms which Government wanted to concede and failed.

There was a complete impasse.

Several of us, then, tried our utmost to persuade the Sardar to come to Poona. Moreover, Sir Chunilal V. Mehta, the Finance Member, by threat of resignation, coerced the Cabinet into accepting the terms I had brought, as the basis of negotiations. Ultimately, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was induced to come. We sat up late in the night at the Finance Member's house and in the early hours of the morning, the final draft was ready. The terms were practically the same as given by Gandhiji to me at Ahmedabad. In the morning, Sir Chunilal V. Mehta went to the Governor and got the terms accepted.

But, the stumbling-block of the lands which had been forfeited and sold during the struggle was still left.

Gandhiji would not accept any terms which did not bring with them the restoration of lands.

Ultimately the late Thakore of Kervada, Rao Bahadur Bhimbhai Naik, and myself went to Surat.

Government House urged upon Mr. Garret (now Sir J. H. Garret), the then Collector, to remove the obstacle from the way. As a result he called the purchasers

and induced them to give up the lands at the price at which they had purchased them. During the course of a few hours I wrote out all the documents, each of which consisted of not more than two or three sentences of comprehensive import; the Collector stamped it; the Registrar registered them. And in the evening we returned to Poona, Rao Bahadur Bhimbhai having become the legal purchaser of all the sold lands.

Bardoli had triumphed.

Thus, the technique of Mahatma Gandhi had achieved a triumph, which Mr. Mahadeo Desai described as "unique"; unique in that it compelled the attention of not only the nation, but of the whole Empire. The justice and moderation of the people's demand won practically the nation's sympathy. It was unique, in that it was fought by perhaps one of the meekest of the *talukas* in India, in that it affected the Revenue Department, whose dispositions, it was up to now believed, not even the gods may question, and in that it compelled a mighty Government pledged to crush the movement, to yield within a fortnight of its pledge.

It was unique in that the leader of the campaign shed all idea of personal prestige, and also in that the Governor of the province, who for a moment seemed to listen to dictation from Whitehall, did all that he personally could, to bring about Peace.

But it was unique in another sense also.

The country had not seen such a triumph for the last several hundred years.

The triumph, however, had a very ludicrous finale. No sooner was the settlement effected than a Press

campaign was engineered in the interests of a gentleman who was nowhere near the place of settlement. All papers offered him journalistic bouquets for his success in bringing about a settlement of the Bardoli question. Sir Chunilal V. Mehta and Sheth Lalji Naranji were not even mentioned, and I was attacked as the one obstacle to the settlement. I felt hurt, mortified.

It was my first experience of the fact, now very familiar to me, that newspapers neither make history nor truly record it.

CHAPTER XIV

THE SIMON COMMISSION

THE triumph of Bardoli had come at a very opportune moment.

Torn and weakened by Hindu-Muslim riots, new political alignments and the absence of any definite goal, the country had been demoralized.

The Hague and Moscow had set a fashion of internationalism.

Some of the leading Congressmen thought that Nationalism as a creed was played out. One of them stated that it was a crime and that India was nationalist only by compulsion. The desire to rule one's own country, to create distinctive institutions, to develop a culture which would weld us into one compact entity, and to mobilize the collective will for national self-preservation, appeared to have faded.

Few appeared to believe that in the triumph of Nationalism alone lay the political and cultural emancipation of India.

As we had not organized ourselves into a free nation, we were the waifs and strays of the world and had no right to international status.

Nationalism implied that power should be concentrated in the hands of the best men drawn from every class. To transfer it to the hands of the short-sighted, whose horizon was coterminous with the shadow of their place of

worship was a negation of it. But the pernicious policy conceived or conceded by Lord Minto in a spirit of high diplomacy that India was to be politically treated as a discordant group of many religions and communities held the ground.

An insidious propaganda was being carried on in favour of a false doctrine that an equitable distribution of power must precede its transfer to our hands ; that before further autonomy was granted, India must be divided into a Hindu and a Mahomedan India or constitutional devices must be found, by which every town and hamlet had two armed camps. There were some, among Indians, who insisted on cutting up provinces in such a way as to transfer the centre of gravity of power to themselves or to their cliques.

Our best men appeared to fall a prey to this propaganda. They did not seem to realize that so long as we kept quarrelling over distribution of power, we would remain powerless to demand its transfer.

The distribution of the provinces was also another aspect of the problem. Provinces, created with a view to securing communal dominance, would be a danger greater than the threatened continuation of dyarchy and separate electorates. India had natural provinces formed on the basis of cultural and linguistic unity. With a small legislature, each province could solve the problem of its internal administration more effectively, than large heterogeneous ones. Each cultural unit would then be free to work out its characteristic solution in provincial matters and a strong National Government at the Centre could exercise its power and influence to organize and consolidate the nation.

A scheme of Federated Provinces without such a Central Government would be a dangerous experiment. But Indians were so anxious to get a little power, that they forgot these central problems. Their hearts yearned for compromises of all sorts. Nobody attached any importance to the basic limitations of all such compromises, that they must facilitate progressive elimination of communal and provincial outlook, in the country's political life.

Thus at that stage, India as a whole awaited developments, though sullenly. Its one desire was to seek an honoured place in the British Commonwealth, which, we were told, was a family of free self-governing nations. The British Parliament, however, provided a rude awakening.

On November 8, 1927, the appointment of the all-white Simon Commission was announced. The history of Britain may speak of many wanton and foolish acts, but from the Indian point of view, of none more so, than the insult which Lord Birkenhead offered to Indians. With his unrivalled powers of casuistry he told India that he could not find half a dozen men fit to represent India; and every Indian politician came to see in him the arch-enemy of India's political aspirations.

It was further decided by the Government that Committees should be elected by the Legislatures to assist the Simon Commission. This was clearly a farce, for the Committees would be elected substantially by the votes of the servants and nominees of Government.

The Anglo-Indian papers also added insult to injury. One of them wrote :—

The anomalies in its composition, functions and powers are typically British, the outcome of British

mentality, and hence we do not believe that any authoritative critic of constitutional history and practice would deny that to get the very best results from its employment in a great political and constitutional inquisition, its personnel ought to be and should preferably be wholly British.

Such brazen-faced defences only served to embitter and enlarge Indian opinion.

We were the props and pillars of the Empire when a hundred million pounds had to be voted, in order that it might not fall. We were fellow-citizens and partners, when cannon-fodder was required for the frontiers of Belgium. But in matters constitutional, we were the serfs of the Empire ; we were to be safeguarded by the " Steel Frame." Our destinies were to be decided by any seven persons, whom an arrogant Secretary of State might select! "The best results can only follow from a preferably wholly British Commission ! "

This was certainly the British mentality, which Indians found difficult to understand, impossible to digest.

Neither the mandates of Lord Birkenhead nor the suavity of Lord Irwin could make Indians forget what was due to their country and they, therefore, gave the only answer possible. Politically-minded classes, with the whole of India minus its job-hunting section behind it, stood up like one man and refused to have anything to do with the Simon Commission. By a resolution, the Madras Congress of 1927 authorized the Working Committee to confer with and secure the co-operation of other parties to make the boycott of the Commission effective n d complete. The boycott of the Simon Commission thus rovided the rallying cry.

The All-Parties Conference was brought into existence to evolve an Indian scheme of constitutional changes. And by the end of 1928, the scheme which came to be outlined in the Nehru Report became a living goal of political ambition in the country.

This united effort, however, came to rather an unfortunate end in December 1928, at the Calcutta Convention, when political India again found itself hopelessly divided. Mr. Jinnah would not accept Pandit Motilal Nehru's report. Mr. Jayakar could not put up with the arrogance of Mr. Jinnah. The epitaph of the Conference was written by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad when he said: "The Muslims were fools to ask for safeguards and the Hindus were greater fools to refuse them."

Gandhiji himself appeared to be in a despondent frame of mind.

At the Congress session (December 1928), Calcutta, which followed in a few days, Mr. S. Srinivasa Iyengar, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose added yet another discordant note, by insisting on Complete Independence as the goal of the Congress.

Gandhiji as usual had a keen sense of realism.

He said : "If you are not prepared to stand by your own words, where will Independence be? Independence is a thing, after all, made of sterner stuff. It is not made by the juggling of words."

The Congress ultimately adopted the Nehru Report and gave Britain time till December 1929 to concede the demands made therein. The Congress resolved to press for Complete Independence, if the Nehru Constitution were not granted within the prescribed period.

Not even Gandhiji's eyes could penetrate beyond the gloom. He, later, wrote about the ultimatum delivered to the British Government by the Calcutta Congress (December 1928) :

> It may be that those who voted for the resolution never meant to carry it out. It may be that I shall have nothing to do during the year in respect of the programme. But I feel that it is not for me to reason thus. I must not lose faith in the workers. A voice from within tells me that I must not only hold myself in readiness to do what comes my way, but I must even think out and suggest means for working out what, to me, is a great programme. Above all, I must prepare myself for the next year's struggle whatever shape it may take.

CHAPTER XV

WHEN SUCCESS REPELLED

DURING the year 1928, I was feeling discontented with all that I did.

I loved my profession. It was, and is, one of the few walks of life, where laurels can be won by sheer merit. I was never happier than when I argued or I met an intricate point. But the conviction had been slowly growing on me that the British system of justice, good as it was in its native soil, was unsuited to this country.

Law's delays would induce a suicidal desire even in a more balanced mind than Hamlet's. A part of a lawyer's work was to devise defences in order that the suit might be successfully transferred to the List of Long Causes and thus give to the defendant three or four years to delay the payment of just dues.

Sometimes a suit to recover Rs. 1,000 cost Rs. 2,000 on each side.

An administration suit, more often than not, distributed an estate between the solicitors of the parties.

I remembered how once eleven counsel retained on our side enabled us to win a thoroughly bad case.

An eminent judge had laid down that costs are a solatium for all inconveniences. Heavy fees were an equally powerful antidote to inconvenient scruples in counsel.

I was, however, no squeamish non-conformist. Day after day life for me took the shape of reckoning up the total of gold mohurs earned. More money had to be earned as life grew more expensive. This was in tune with the traditions of the Bar. Most of the lawyers who led our Bar, Indian and British, were conscientious, upright men ; but the world was too much with them. To pile up guineas, to bully or laugh at an opponent in court, to sneer at idealism of every sort or kind, to tell smutty stories or talk scandal, and to while away the evening over a glass of whisky or a game of bridge was with many the *summum bonum* of life. No wonder that a civilization which had as its basis the acquisition, possession and enjoyment of money could not produce better specimens of its high priests !

I lacked the courage to break away from this routine. I simply drifted. Again and again my mind vaguely and weakly went back to Manu, Yajnavalkya and Mitakshara who dispensed justice irrespective of the capacity of either side to mark a fee. And often in a dreamy sort of way I yearned for some purpose higher than making money and spending it.

I relied on the West for my dress and, on many occasions, for my food. But to me, the most repellent feature of my activities was the social life which my position compelled me to live.

I met insipid millionaires and denationalized apes of Western manners, and conversed with them about the weather. I sat at teas with ladies with powdered faces and no brains, and trained myself to tell them stupid stories. I herded with men to whom life was a boredom and who measured life's value by the membership of a

fashionable club or the range of a golf handicap. I attended parties where Indians ate European courses of tinned food, consumed costly wine and talked of young ladies in spicy terms.

On rare occasions, I had extracted the true ring of literary beauty out of the memory of some personal struggle. But now there was not even a difficulty to hang a stray piece of heroism on. And I found the secret of true literary art slipping out of my hands. I felt like the cat which ran round its tail, but never succeeded in catching it.

Since 1925 I had been actively associated with the Bombay University.

I studied its problems and worked to transform it into a university which would collect, develop and disseminate higher knowledge ; which would attract to it all cultural materials, refine them, transfuse them into one distinctive national culture ; and which would radiate influences moulding the life and character of future citizens so that they may represent and interpret national ideals.

The University, to me, was a great nationalizing agency, the noblest institution in the State. But our university was principally federal, and knew little of this life. It was a university without an organized university life, a contradiction in terms.

The idea of a university for Gujarat had long fascinated me. In March 1926, a Gujarat University Committee was formed in Bombay to popularize the idea, but the activities of the Committee were suspended when the Gaekwar appointed a Commission (of which I was a member)

to report on a university for Baroda. The Gaekwar of Baroda and the then Dewan, Sir Manubhai Mehta, had expressed themselves in favour of a university for Baroda. But, soon after, Sir Manubhai Mehta left the service of Baroda. The European Chairman of the Commission developed a dislike for its Indian element. And when we submitted our report to the Gaekwar in 1928, it was not allowed even to be published.

Again I wanted for the Indian languages their legitimate place in higher studies, but the British Professors disliked English being displaced from the curriculum and the classicists would not yield their claim by an inch. Consequently, in spite of my incessant efforts, the languages of the people were accepted only on sufferance. In any university which was not ridden by foreign influences, such a position would be unthinkable.

CHAPTER XVI

The Real Rulers

MY Legislative career was barren too. The hopes with which I had entered the Bombay Legislative Council in 1926, were also dashed to the ground.

No one had any use for a new scheme of nation-building work; for that meant change, and change did not suit men whose sole business was to maintain the *status quo*. Experience revealed one thing: the bureaucracy was in all matters inflexibly hostile to nationalist Indians.

The machinery of the Council was peculiarly devised to corrupt, humiliate and tame our men into submission. Every man was duly placed; his future possibilities were mapped out with unerring precision. Some could be corrupted by a nod; some by a pat on the back; some by teas, some by dinners, others by jobs or titles, and yet others by some nominal concessions.

Every division on the floor of the Bombay Legislative Council meant a barter of votes for promised favours. Paid officials, Government contractors and grateful or expectant seekers of favour always constituted a majority in the House. Even politically-minded members sighed for the official smile. *Khadi* caps waited in official ante-chambers and talked to the burra sahebs with bated breath and whispering humbleness. No organized party could be effectively formed, for many preferred to be left free to deal with the Government Whip directly rather than leave their votes to party chiefs.

The whole thing was fetid, sickening.

Bardoli had taught me a lesson.

I had seen the soulless machinery of Government at work. The bureaucracy was ready to wipe a whole *taluka* out of existence rather than rectify one obvious error.

During the Bardoli negotiations, I had occasions to compare these muddy politics with the clean game which Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel played, and of which truth and willingness to suffer were the cardinal laws. In the Legislature, we were mere victims of our conceit or self-interest, the play-things of the powerful official group.

Thereafter, every day I spent in the Council meant for me bitter humiliation. I had no heart to participate in the sordid farce, and was waiting for the next election to give up my seat.

In summer 1929, when I went to Simla to spend my vacation, I wanted to gather some data for a book on our political problems, which I then intended to write. What did I find? The country was governed neither by Britain nor by the Viceroy but by a close coterie of powerful bureaucrats. They had unlimited power in India and unlimited resources in England. They were in constant touch with the retired civilians in England and were backed up by the most powerful Press in India. This close corporation was really the master of the whole country. It paid to the absentee landlord—the British public—huge sums of money picked out of the pockets of poor Indians. It assessed the price of every Indian politician in the Assembly and had reduced the creation of dissensions to a fine art.

From unimpeachable sources, I learnt of the doings of our great men of the Assembly as well as of their weakness.

Away from and above this world stood three men, Lord Irwin, the Viceroy, a well-intentioned, noble-hearted gentleman who, like the fly on the wheel, thought he was turning the official machine; Mr. Vithalbhai Patel, the President of the Indian Legislative Assembly, an unrelenting tactician, determined to fight the bureaucracy at all costs and with every weapon; and Pandit Motilal Nehru, a noble patriot handicapped by a party of unruly and jealous adherents, a great incorruptible shining bright against the murky background of sordid politics. A month and a half of Simla strengthened my growing conviction that, never, never would India get an inch further on the path of self-government, nor would an Indian peasant get a grain more of food for his hungry family, so long as its fate rested with the governing corporation which read the portents of its downfall in every one of our national aspirations. But, for the moment the country lay, beyond hope, at its feet.

The British Government, as it was constituted in India and the materialistic civilization which it represented stifled my very being. I longed for a system and a civilization in which my soul and my country could find a true expression.

I came away unspeakably sad.

CHAPTER XVII

THE IRWIN GESTURE

IN the latter half of 1929, a battle of wits was being fought between Lord Irwin and Gandhiji.

On October 31, H. E. the Viceroy announced the scheme of the Round Table Conference and declared that "the natural issue of the Indian constitutional progress (which the British declaration of August, 1917, contemplated) was the attainment of Dominion Status."

The Congress Working Committee offered their co-operation to the Government of India to evolve a scheme of Dominion constitution subject to certain conditions, Gandhiji declared himself to be "dying for co-operation." He wanted a change of heart and, if that was forthcoming he was willing to help to establish a Dominion Government.

With his characteristic frankness, he stated in a letter to English friends:

> India had not developed strength enough to assert the position adumbrated in the manifesto (issued by All-Party Leaders in reference to the declaration of Lord Irwin, October 31, 1929), and as such it will be largely through the good grace of British people. But if the time was not yet ripe for India to come into her own I had patience enough to wait.

In December 1929 the Congress met at Lahore. On the eve of the Congress session, Gandhiji met Lord Irwin and rejected the scheme of the Round Table Conference.

On the morning of the interview an ineffective attempt had been made to blow up the Viceregal train which carried Lord Irwin to his interview with Gandhiji.

Gandhiji, though elected President, had insisted upon Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru occupying the Congress Gadi, Lahore (December 23, 1929). At that session the famous resolution for Complete Independence was passed, with a rider in favour of Civil Disobedience, coupled with a condemnation of the attempt on the Viceregal train.

It all looked unreal at that time.

There were some who wanted "real Independence and no damned nonsense," but did not desire to resign from the Councils and wanted to attend the Round Table Conference.

Mr. Srinivasa Iyengar and Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose, disgusted with what they termed the weak moderation of the Lahore Congress and the "tyranny of the majority," endeavoured to form a separate party within the Congress, which, however, was still-born.

When Lord Irwin made his declaration in October 1929, many politically-minded Indians felt convinced that a new era of friendship between Britain and India would dawn with the Round Table Conference; but the conviction was based on an ignorance of British politics and psychology. Vague promises from the Labour Party and stout opposition from other parties in England followed that declaration. Even the confiding and expectant Liberals of India had not been vouchsafed any assurance. A regime of repression was being ruthlessly established in the land. Were these things an augury of the self-government we were going to have? Were the British in earnest, when they held out hopes of self-government?

There could be only one answer: the British statesmen did not propose to give a bit more than what they felt would be wrenched out of their hands, and they were only inviting us to walk into their parlour.

Once we agreed to enter into negotiations with them without any agreement as to fundamentals they could be relied upon to make short work of all our claims either in the name of the masses or the minorities, or, failing everything, in the name of the Trust, which Providence, Britain claimed, had reposed in the British people exclusively. One thing is certain. Any form of government under which we would be the masters of our own home was not going to be given to us at the proposed Round Table Conferences.

In the meantime, reactionary British statesmen had raised protests against the declarations made by Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, the then British Premier, Captain Wedgwood Benn, the Secretary of State, and Lord Irwin, the Viceroy, about granting Dominion Status to India. Ultimately, the Viceroy had to explain away his announcement by stating that "the Round Table Conference was convened only for elucidating and harmonizing the opinion," whatever it may mean. This disillusioned a large number of younger men who had come to look upon the Round Table Conference with some hope.

CHAPTER XVIII

I Surrender

THEN events moved fast. At the session of the Congress Working Committee which was held on February 14, 15 and 16, 1930, Gandhiji was authorized to start Civil Disobedience. Gandhiji decided upon the breach of the salt law and in his letter to the Viceroy dated March 2, 1930, stated:

> I know that in embarking on non-violence, I shall be running what might fairly be termed a mad risk. But the victories of Truth have never been won without risks, often of the bravest character. Conversion of a nation that has consciously or unconsciously preyed upon another far more numerous, far more ancient and no less cultured than itself, is worth any amount of risks.

Suddenly Gandhiji assumed an extraordinary position. A thrill went through the country; and the floating atoms of national life came together around him. Day after day men and women heard his voice and followed his activities with breathless interest. To many like me, the love of protected existence which I was then leading, fell away.

Gandhiji had decided to undertake a march to Dandi at the head of a carefully selected volunteer corps, with a view to break the salt laws at the end of the journey. He set out on the historic march on March 13.

When the day appointed for the march to Dandi arrived a new spirit had come over India. Those in authority thought that Gandhiji was making himself ridiculous. The



AT JUHU

Arrival at Juhu near Bombay. Sheth Rameshwardas Birla, the host, leading.

Liberals treated the whole thing as a joke. The people, however, were stirred to their depths, and when he left Sabarmati *Ashram* on March 13, 1930, for Dandi, the hopes of millions were centred in him. A spectacle unknown to history was unrolled before man's eyes—a frail man leading 79 followers on foot to a distant seaside place to break the salt law in order that *swaraj* might be won! To the cold politician, it naturally appeared a fool's errand; to the man who knew the making of nations, it was the moment of a nation's birth. For many years Gandhiji had been the most powerful man in the country, the man with the largest following and greatest influence, but on that day he became entitled, and rightly, to say, "the Nation! I am the Nation!"

Then Gandhiji started on his immortal march to Dandi. Chenghis and Napoleon enforced conscription at the point of the dagger and the bayonet. But this man's method of conscription was worse; it tortured not the body but the soul. Every day of his march brought me tense excitement and insufferable agony. I felt like a thrice-cursed slave tied to a millstone of luxurious living, destined to grind and to grind for ever. Why was I not in my country's service? Why was I not ready to stand for the ideals which I always cherished? Why had I not the courage even of an ordinary Gujarati villager? When Gujarat was rising like one man, why was I, who always talked of its greatness, staying away from the fight? When the nation had declared a war, why was I thinking of sneaking away to Kashmir?

I could not resist this any longer, and surrendered.

On April 14, 1930, I wrote the following letter to Gandhiji:

For some days past, I have carefully watched the heroic struggle which Gujarat has commenced under your

guidance and I feel that I cannot let career or comforts stand between me and the step which I am taking.

I believed and still believe that Dominion Status is not far removed from Independence; but after anxious thought I am convinced that the Government is determined not to transfer substantial power to Indians; that the present constitution is a mask to conceal the irresponsible despotism of a well-organized official group; that no political progress or economic salvation is possible unless by the magnitude of our sacrifice we compel, to borrow your inimitable phrase, "a change of heart" in those who have constituted themselves the relentless enemies of our aspirations.

In 1920, I left the Congress because at Nagpur you changed its creed; to-day in 1930, I rejoin it because I have come to believe that outside that creed there is no honest political life. For long I disapproved of your methods; to-day except through them I cannot visualize a free India.

I have joined the Congress and submitted my resignation of the membership of the Bombay Legislative Council. It was with the deep mortification that I assisted in the farce enacted at the Bombay Council, where, under the garb of Democracy, the most irresponsible despotism was legalized.

I am now offering my services, feeble as they are, to you. Perhaps delicate healthmay make it difficult for me to bear the strenuous life of hardships and comparative poverty which I will have to face, but when the whole of Gujarat and with it India has started on a glorious march to martyrdom, I who dreamt of their greatness through my literary efforts cannot stand by and look on.

Personal affairs and a part-heard case will keep me occupied till the 17th; on the 18th I will go to see my old mother at Panchgani; on the 21st I will place myself at your disposal.

Once our affairs are adjusted, my wife, who, if you remember, once wanted to join your *Ashram*, will also place her services at your command.

I met Mahadevbhai yesterday; and he said you could be seen at Dandi on Wednesday. If you let me know by wire, I will come there as I expect that the judge before whom I am appearing will not sit in court on Wednesday.

On our way to Vejalpur near Navsari where my wife and I went to meet him on March 21, I could not resist thinking of the strange fate which had brought me back to this man.

When Gandhiji came laughing to the house, where we were waiting for him, he greeted Mr. Abbas Tyabji affectionately, and welcomed me with his inimitable smile. "Both of you have come back from your *Vanavasa* (life in the forest)!"

Curious comment on a life which the world called successful.

Later, as he sat in a little room with several people surrounding him, I could not resist comparing this war camp with the camps on the other side. No one was worried nor even anxious. There was no secrecy and no subterfuge. Gandhiji laughed, cracked jokes, discussed plans and gave directions. And as I listened to him I was struck by the profound knowledge he possessed of the mass mind and of the springs of action which galvanize crowds.

CHAPTER XIX

I AM CONVICTED

ON Monday, April 21, 1930, I was arrested for preparing salt unlawfully at Bhatia Baug, opposite the Victoria Terminus, though as a matter of fact, I had done nothing except lead a procession of people who had brought salt-water from the sea and looking on, as a lady was lighting a stove. I was convicted the same day to six months' simple imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 200.

I was in ecstasy and the days which followed made a refreshing change from restless professional activities. Regular exercise, prayers and study added a happy rhythm to a life which had no hurry and no worry. After two months, I was transferred to the Yeravda Jail. We could hear from our yard, the *pat-pat-pat* of Gandhiji's sandals and the bleatings of the goat, which provided the Mahatma with his quota of goat milk. Civil Disobedience raged outside, with unabated strength.

We were quite happy, in spite of the callous indifference of the jailor and other minor prison officials, who, not infrequently, tried to make us unhappy.

It was August 1930 when (now the Rt. Hon'ble) Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and (now the Rt. Hon'ble) Mr. M. R. Jayakar came to interview Gandhiji about the offer made by the Viceroy to the Congress to join the first Round Table Conference. They sent for me and told me as to what their offer was. I could not help feeling that both

these friends lacked that sympathetic understanding which successful negotiators in such a difficult task should have. Some days later, I was transferred to the Nasik Central Jail to make room for Pandit Motilal Nehru and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who were to be brought from a U.P. prison to the Yeravda Prison, to enable Gandhiji to confer with them, with regard to the peace proposal sponsored by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mr. M. R. Jayakar. How that peace offer was turned down, is a matter of history.

The Nasik Jail afforded a refreshing change. The jail was neat and spacious, the officials were considerate, and the climate superb. I met many fresh arrivals in jail, and heard from them authentic news of the splendid achievements of Bombay City in the prosecution of the non-violent war.

Indeed, jail life lost its terrors for our people. Official discipline was only maintained in name. Whatever discipline there was, it was the result of the influence of some Gandhian leader, rather than by the authority of the prison staff.

On October 2, 1930, I was released and was received at the Victoria Terminus by a crowd, the proportion of which I could never have guessed before. I was arrested in the early days of the movement, and only now I learnt how in six months, Bombay had been turned into a non-violent edition of Paris, in its well-known revolutionary days. Every morning *Prabhat Feris* woke up citizens to the tune of some heroic song, and in the evening, thousands marched in procession. At intervals, processions squatted on the ground for hours, in defiance of prohibitory orders. Women and boys wrestled with burly sergeants for the

national flag. As we proudly said, in Bombay, then, every man was a Congressman and every house was a Congress House.

I was new to the Congress organization and to this kind of movement, and sometimes I was at a loss to understand the springs which governed these movements. Then, the truth dawned on me. The adherents of Gandhiji had courted jail at an early stage. A small but compact body of men, able and patriotic, but with a policy and programme, which I could never associate with Gandhiji or his principles, were in complete control of the city. They made it a point not to court arrest themselves, and they saw to it that dummy dictators were periodically garlanded into the jail. They were thinking in terms of the campaign conducted by Michael Collins in Ireland. Non-violence was to them a transitory stage and they were indifferent when and how that stage was crossed over. In consequence, the movement had lost much of its spontaneity. I respected some of these gentlemen for their abilities. They had been friends for years, but we had come to agree on the fundamental divergence of our views.

I felt acutely, that, in seeking Gandhiji's leadership in pursuing Truth and Non-violence, I should have happened to drop among these friends. This group of workers also wished that it should be relieved of me by sending me back to jail. And, the situation became grotesque when the public, in view of my position in the city, took me to be a leading spirit of the controlling group. For a month or two I prayed for the arrest which, however, did not materialize. Ultimately, one morning the controlling group was rounded up and some of us were left in charge of the movement in Bombay.

I was for some time appointed a member of the Working Committee by Pandit Motilal Nehru and went to Jubbulpore to fan the dying embers of *satyagraha* into flame. Bombay City, however, remained active till the last, though we had to work hard to ensure that an aggressive programme was ever in the forefront, so that the people did not lapse into lethargy.

CHAPTER XX

Gandhiji Triumphs

ON November 12, 1930, the first session of the Round Table Conference was formally opened. The Princes, in the name of progress were not slow in dominating it, and tried to make friends with Indian Nationalism, whose power they had witnessed and felt.

The international situation was, meanwhile, becoming difficult for England. In January 1931, while concluding the first session of the Round Table Conference, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald came out with his announcement, which was almost in terms, the same as approved by Pandit Motilal Nehru, some months ago. We were at Pandit Motilal Nehru's house at Allahabad at the time and we drafted a stinging reply, but Pandit Motilal Nehru was asked by cable, by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mr. M. R. Jayakar, not to commit himself until their return to India. So, the reply was held in abeyance, for the time being.

On January 25, 1931, Gandhiji and the members of the Congress Working Committee were released. The Rt. Hon'ble Srinivasa Sastri then intervened and induced Gandhiji to ask Lord Irwin for an interview. The interview was granted. After a series of meetings between Gandhiji and Lord Irwin, the Gandhi-Irwin Truce was signed on March 4, 1931. From the imperialistic point of view, Mr. Winston Churchill was not unjustified in protesting against the naked *fakir* striding up the steps of the Viceroy's Palace. It was the greatest event in Indian

history for centuries. An Indian representing the whole of India had entered into an agreement as a High Contracting Party with the representative of the greatest Empire in modern times. No doubt there were some who belittled it, but they would have been disgruntled in any case.

Soon after the Gandhi-Irwin Truce, the Congress was held at Karachi, in the last days of March 1931, with Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel as the President, to confirm the truce and to define India's attitude towards the proposed Round Table Conference.

The Karachi Congress (1931) was a supreme triumph for Gandhiji. It was a unique event which left an indelible mark on the history of India. Being the first Congress which I had attended after Nagpur in 1929, it created a tremendous impression on me.

At Karachi, the plenary session was held for the first time in an open stadium, with which we are now familiar. From the platform, the whole assemblage presented a gorgeous spectacle almost unreal in its romantic beauty.

For over ten years Gandhiji had built up a party organization which was well-nigh invulnerable. Its steel frame was perhaps more steely than that of the Government of India. His word was supreme law, which none dared challenge. If an impulsive man were to throw a challenge, Gandhiji went on benignly smiling. The atmosphere slowly changed; what Gandhiji had said appeared to be the only right thing, and the man who came to challenge, remained to be laughed at or pitied. Dictators had been known to put critics out of the way, by doubtful means. But Gandhiji did not rule by force, intrigue or violence. His method was simple. Very often selfless Reason was the

only weapon he employed. He invariably worked himself into a morally sound position, and everything which he did not support, looked absurd or immoral.

The All-India Congress Committee, the Supreme National Executive when the Congress is not in plenary session, had a difficult task set to it, at Karachi. The Committee, consisting of about 350 members, frame the resolutions that are to be submitted to the Congress in its plenary session. The Committee did not function at Karachi as a strictly deliberative body. Some members individually grumbled at Gandhiji, but collectively accepted what he said. Their loyalty was not the result of a blind surrender of judgment, as a critic put it, for the Committee contained many men of intelligence and of political wisdom, who wielded great power and influence in their own provinces. They placed their votes at the disposal of Gandhiji out of their free will. They agreed that the greatness and the prestige of the Congress was due to Gandhiji alone. The glorious fight of the previous year was his, both in conception and execution. The truce he had made, had enhanced the national dignity. He alone could attain the object which everyone had at heart. Therefore, they would give him all the authority which he wanted and more, if need be.

Gandhiji's eye was on every one. He applied his mind to every little detail. He watched the smallest development with a subtle discernment. He went on smiling, and as he smiled he disarmed his critics. I admired this dictatorship, for it was not based on coercion. It was deeply rooted in love and persuasion. In the first place, it enabled the country, after a long period of stagnation, to stand united. It organized public life and taught to the nation, well known for its fissiparous tendency, two things, which so

far were held inherently incompatible, revolution and peaceful organization. In France, Rousseau revolutionized thought and ideal. Robespierre let loose the forces of insurrection ; later Napoleon organized all the forces so generated. Gandhiji presented a phenomenal combination of all these three mighty phases in one revolution, wholly pledged to Non-violence. If only Gandhiji lived long enough, India, I felt convinced, would accomplish both revolution and reconstruction simultaneously.

This was the most extraordinary event in history—a political dictatorship maintained by force of moral superiority. The dictator was not a master, but a father —*Bapu*. His speeches at the Karachi Congress, in anybody's mouth, would have evoked resentment. In his speech, proposing the new Working Committee (the Congress Cabinet), he gave reasons for excluding some names and for including others, and in each case, the reason was truly and frankly given. If anyone else had made that speech, the House would have risen in wrath against the speaker, for politicians are not known to be willing listeners to frank talks. But in this case, after two hours' discussion, most members agreed to the proposals willingly.

Gandhiji's capacity for performing miracles put his adversaries at a great disadvantage. They could oppose him but they had no rival programme. They could talk but they could not prepare a nation for concerted mass action. I met many well-known men who complained of the truce, but not one of them dared to go so far as to stand aloof from Gandhiji and to say: "I will go on my own way and fight with my own weapon."

Pandit Jawaharlal obviously distrusted the Gandhi-Irwin Truce, but, all the same, he moved the resolution

confirming it in the open Congress. He could not see any other way but to leave the country's fate in Gandhiji's hands. Some spoke against the truce either to adorn the Press reports or to tickle the vanity of a few admirers. Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose tried to raise a standard of revolt but ended by reading a leftist manifesto.

The fact was that the truce had been a great triumph for the nation. Through it, Gandhiji hoped to lead India to a stage of constructive political development. By entering into it, he exhibited self-control, clarity of vision and constructive statesmanship. It was a truce, which a great and generous man of peace alone could sign.

The Karachi Congress ratified the Gandhi-Irwin Truce and the Congress Delegation to the second Round Table Conference was given almost full powers to agree to any safeguard which was "demonstrably necessary in Indian interests." If Gandhiji was there to demonstrate, every safeguard to which he would agree would be found demonstrably necessary. But, one could be assured that the safeguards which satisfied Gandhiji would more than satisfy a large bulk of the Indian people.

CHAPTER XXI

The Challenge of Violence

A RESOLUTION relating to Fundamental Rights and the National Economic Programme was principally Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's contribution to the Karachi Congress. It was necessary that, at that stage, the Congress should solemnly record its political pledges and the Economic Programme. It put forward an Electoral Programme, progressive in nature and political in outlook, which was an improvement on the eleven points enumerated by Gandhiji in his letter to the Viceroy on the eve of the historic Dandi march, in 1930. Gandhiji had formulated eleven demands, the fulfilment of which, he held, would prove the sincerity of the British policy towards India. The Karachi resolution served to allay the fear entertained by the minorities and was a fitting reply to the revolutionaries, who believed that they alone had the monopoly of looking after the workers and the peasants. It shocked the bourgeoisie but did not placate the ardent Marxists. It enhanced the prestige of the Congress. The Subjects Committee, however, did not like the resolution and raised many objections to it. It was badly drafted; it was incomplete; it did not express many points of view; it was too advanced; it was not sufficiently well advanced. A dilatory motion was brought forward, and even Gandhiji was inclined to postpone its consideration. But, it was the pet child of the impetuous Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. A sub-committee, on which I was asked to serve, examined the amendments as well as it could and the famous Karachi resolution, relative to the Fundamental Rights

and the Economic Programme of the Congress, as ultimately approved by Gandhiji, was accepted by the plenary session of the Congress.

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, a great general and a born organizer, proved an ideal President for the post-war Congress. I saw him presiding over a democratic assembly for the first time. He was too downright for that House. He wanted business to be done, and those who wanted there a debating society, had no chance.

Another notable figure found in the Congress for the first time was Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the "Frontier Gandhi"—as unlike the original as one can be in appearance. Over six feet in height, carrying a stoop natural to a very tall man, he made a picturesque figure. As he spoke, the sincere note in his powerful voice rang out clear and true, and forthwith made him the beloved of the crowd. Who could read the dreams which he hid under the unfathomable light of his keen eyes?

The Karachi Congress witnessed an organized effort by those in the Congress, who had not reconciled themselves to Gandhiji or his principles, to found a party in order to capture power in the Congress. At that time Mr. M. N. Roy was reported to be in India, in disguise, making efforts to win over Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Some of the Communists wanted me also to consider the possibility of my joining them.

The Communists also left with me considerable literature to enable me to appreciate their point of view. Gandhiji, they told me, was finished and the country was ready to overthrow him at an early date.

I had followed the progress of Communism in this country. Mr. Roy was among the first to establish contact

with Moscow leaders and to entertain a dream of a Communist India throwing off British imperialism with Marx's creed, Lenin's technique, and with Russian aid.

Mr. Dange was perhaps the first gifted man in Bombay who was fired by a genuine devotion to that creed and technique. I have always held him in high esteem. In 1924, Mr. Dange was one of the accused in the Meerut conspiracy case. Later, my attention was drawn to a manifesto produced in the case. It planned to the following effect:—

> Discontent in rural areas was to be transformed into organized agrarian strikes, and food riots were to be followed by the plunder of cornstacks and assaults upon large estates, with a view to confiscation by "military action."
>
> Reactionary passivism (it pronounced) must be repudiated. What burst out spontaneously at Gorakhpur, Rae Bareili, Chauri Chaura, Malabar, Central India and what is going on in the Punjab must be developed by every possible means . . . . . . Peasant revolts should spread like wildfire from one end of the country to the other.

This was the boldest challenge to Gandhiji's teachings flung in India, and with my newly acquired faith in the efficacy of the Gandhian technique, I examined it closely. It was Mr. M. N. Roy, perhaps, who was responsible for inducing the Communist International to start a Communist Party in India. It was due to the influence of that party, that Mr. Dange staged in Bombay the great textile strike of 1928, which ruined the Bombay textile industry and brought hundreds of workers to the edge of starvation.

There was in February 1929 a fierce Hindu-Muslim riot in Bombay, in the course of which 149 persons lost their

lives, several hundreds were injured and considerable property was destroyed.

Pursuant to a motion for adjournment moved by me in the Bombay Legislative Assembly, calling upon the Government to appoint a Committee to inquire into the causes of the riot, a Committee of Inquiry presided over by Mr. Justice Percival of the Bombay High Court was appointed. In the latter half of 1929, in the course of collecting and sifting the evidence to be produced before the Percival Committee, I came to learn something of the communistic technique, as practised in 1928.

Shorn of slogans, it had two aspects. The first, the psychological aspect, aimed at hypnotising the malcontents among the workers into a belief that Order, except when imposed by Communist organizations, was their greatest enemy, and that the Red regime, whatever it was, would come, if forces of Peace could be successfully defied. The second, the organizational aspect, aimed at a network of agencies, which would intimidate the dissenters from the Communist technique into submission, in chawls, in streets, and in workshops. The first was calculated to prepare the material, which, at a given moment, would work for a violent outburst. The second was intended to trap the unwary and the timid. It was difficult to see how this method would lead India to its goal; how an internecine war between the upper and the lower classes would lead to the elimination of foreign rule, how intimidation would prepare the people for a determined nationhood.

As against this, I had seen the Gandhian method in full operation. An Indian had marched to victory, the leader of millions, the centre of their hopes. His voice was heard more powerfully from behind the walls of the

jail than when he was outside it. He had emerged unscathed from it and imposed his country's will on the foreign satrap. The rightful heir to India's greatness, he had thirsted for a war of spirit, giving to the world a unique message—and, Humanity in chains, had forgotten for a moment the slavery of centuries and rejoiced in a new hope of emancipation.

Under Gandhiji's guidance, Indians had thrown themselves into the fight regardless of every hardship, welcoming jail, or even rushing into the jaws of death. They had treated life's dangers as but child's play. For a few glorious days, they had stood smiling with their feet firmly planted on the mouth of a volcano. The delicate and shy Indian women had scorned their sheltered existence to obey the national mandate and, like *Chandies*, unprotected but fearless, braved assaults, wrested the national flag from bullying sergeants, and courted jail with a smiling face, holding the honour of the country dearer than the traditional ties of home. Little children had shouted "Victory," danced to the flutter of the national flag, hurled defiance even in their cradles, with the cry: *Inquilab Zindabad !*

Satyagraha, in form and spirit, under the direction of Gandhiji, was different from most movements known to history. Its principal condition was the people's determination to invite sufferings upon themselves. Men and women broke the salt law, not because they felt it unjust only then, but because they wanted to get inside the jail. Men and women went to the Azad Maidan in Bombay, for they wanted their heads broken by the police. In the past, many have preferred death to defeat. Carthage and Jhalor sought self-immolation, when surrounded by forces of destruction, and that was the better choice. In the Indian struggle, there was no element of helplessness.

Satyagraha was neither born of escapism nor came to be wielded by compulsion, but it was willingly and voluntarily invited. Whoever did not join the movement, was at liberty to sit at home and enjoy a life of ease.

Thus, these two techniques were sharply antagonistic. In the light of this conviction, I read the Royist literature. Its slogans sounded to me all unreal; mere words which bore no relation to the Indian temperament and the Indian conditions, as I had known them. I therefore could not ally myself with those restless spirits who thought in terms of Leninistic slogans and hoped to wrest power from the Congress and to work up the country against Gandhiji.

The idea that Gandhiji was an "exploded myth," and his immediate followers a nerveless and brainless lot and that the crumbling Gandhian India was waiting for a bold adventurer to grasp it, has had a hold over certain sections in the country since 1924, and has come to the fore at all political crises, even as recently as April 1939, during the Calcutta session of the All-India Congress Committee, when Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose resigned the presidentship of the Congress, failing to get any support for his policy and programme.

CHAPTER XXII

The Conquest

AFTER the Karachi Congress (1931) a little incident brought me closer to Gandhiji. I had joined him in April 1930 without having come into close personal contact, but I expected that after he came out of jail, he would accept my services in the spirit in which I had offered them. But, the jealousies which had been roused during the Civil Disobedience Movement, had led some kind friends assiduously to circulate a rumour that both my wife and I were in some way insidiously connected with the bureaucracy, while the struggle was in progress. In those days, a whisper of that kind could destroy anyone. Nobody cared to inquire what motive I could have, what benefit I could gain, by changing my old position at the Bar and in the public for that of an abettor of a foreign bureaucracy. Wherever I went, whispers of this calumny were spread in advance. Within a few hours of his release from jail, Gandhiji had come to know of it. I sought an early opportunity to discuss the matter with him.

I remember the walk, which Gandhiji and myself had together on the Hornby Vellard at 5 o'clock in the early morning. He told me of what he had heard and added that he was not prepared to believe the calumny. At that moment, my mortification knew no bounds. I had come to Gandhiji out of an irresistible inner urge, not in expectation of any reward; and for no fault of mine, I was being branded as a political outcast. With a voice choking with emotion, I told him that I would not like to continue

under the shadow of calumnies and would like to go back to my old life, away from politics. But he had the gift of understanding, and with his inimitable sweetness, he consoled me. Such a thing, he said, was not uncommon in politics and we all had to survive it. He promised to see that the calumny was properly dealt with.

On the solitary road, with the sea thundering at our feet and the stars watching overhead, I realized how truly great he was.

When we parted, he was no longer my political chief; he had entered my life.

As I went home, the words, which were used for Socrates, came back to me.

> When I hear him speak, my heart leaps up far more than the hearts of those who celebrate the Corybantic mysteries; my tears are poured out as he talks, a thing I have often seen happen to many others besides myself. I have heard Pericles and other excellent orators, and have been pleased with their discourses, but I suffered nothing of this kind; nor was any soul ever on those occasions disturbed and filled with self-reproach, as if it were slavishly laid prostrate. But this Marsyas here had often affected me in the way I describe, until the life which I lived seemed hardly worth living. Do not deny it, Socrates; for I know well that if even now I chose to listen to you, I could not resist, but should again suffer the same effects. For, my friends, he forces me to confess that while I myself am still in need of many things, I neglect my own necessities and attend to those of the Athenians. I stop my ears, therefore, as from the Sirens, and flee away, as fast as possible, that I may not sit down beside him, and grow old in

listening to his talk. For this man has reduced me to feel the sentiment of shame, which I imagine no one would readily believe was in me. For I feel in his presence my incapacity of refuting what he says or of refusing to do that which he directs; but when I depart from him the glory which the multitude confers overwhelms me. I escape therefore, and hide myself from him, and when I see him I am overwhelmed with humiliation, because I have neglected to do what I have confessed to him ought to be done: and often and often have I wished that he were no longer to be seen among men. But if that were to happen I well know that I should suffer far greater pain; so that where I can turn, or what I can do with this man I know not. All this have I and many others suffered from the pipings of this satyr.

That is why, I thought, Gandhiji has made himself a conscience-keeper of hundreds of men and women.

CHAPTER XXIII

CONSTITUTION-MAKING

SOON after the Gandhi-Irwin Truce (March 1931), Lord Willingdon succeeded Lord Irwin in the Viceroyalty and he became a willing instrument of the Services who were anxious to get out of the truce by sacrificing its spirit to the letter. Disputes arose on minor points and the greatest of Indians was left to discuss small points arising out of the Land Revenue Code with arrogant local officials.

Consequently, Gandhiji refused to go to London. To one of my letters, beseeching him to leave these matters to others and to attend the Round Table Conference, he replied: "The man who looks after his pies, has his rupee secure."

In his letter to Lord Willingdon, Gandhiji wrote—"I can only give you my assurance that it was not without the greatest and most anxious deliberation, that I came to the conclusion that in view of your decision, I could not, consistently with my obligation here, attend the R. T. C."

But, it did not suit the imperial game to quarrel with Gandhiji at that stage. Ultimately, Gandhiji was induced to leave India for London in August 1931. He had, however, serious misgivings about the success of his mission. One of the last things that he told my wife was that we should not "settle down" till he returned.

At the first session of the Round Table Conference, the Indian Princes had been anxious to get rid of Paramountcy

but not to relax their autocratic rule. The British Indian politicians were bewildered; they could not get responsibility without the aid of the States and they did not like a Federation with the States, unreformed and autocratic, dominating it. The Conservatives in England were hostile, the Liberals cautious and the Labourites helpless. Above all (in that period, September 1930—January 1931), India was ablaze with Civil Disobedience. It was at that time that the genius of Lord Reading, an ex-Viceroy of India, and one who had to contend against the first Non-co-operation Movement of 1920, seized upon Federation as a powerful instrument, which could perpetuate the British hold on India.

But there was diversity of views about the Federation, which was on everybody's lips. The Montagu-Chelmsford Report envisaged "a congeries of self-governing Indian Provinces associated for certain purposes under a responsible Government of India; with possibly what are now the Native States of India finally embodied in the same whole, of Dominion Status."

The Simon Commission Report looked forward to a Federation of States and a Federation of British Indian Provinces working together in a Commonwealth enjoying Dominion Status. At the first Round Table Conference, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru (now the Rt. Hon'ble) invited the Princes to co-operate in visualizing an India "which will be one single whole, each part of which may be autonomous and may enjoy absolute independence within its borders, regulated by proper relations with the rest."

The Maharaja of Bikaner supported a Federal system of government composed of the States and British India and urged that the wealth of experience available at the

Table should devise a means of uniting these differing units into a powerful Federal administration. Sir Manubhai Mehta, speaking on the occasion, supported a Federation which could legislate on Federal subjects, even though the Princes may have "to suffer diminution of some of their sovereignty."

The Sankey Report—as the report of the Federal Structure Sub-Committee of the first session of the Round Table Conference presided over by Lord Sankey is widely known—approved of a Federal Government for the whole of India, with relatively larger powers of control and interference as regards the British Indian provinces.

The Prime Minister declared the policy of His Majesty's Government to be that "the Central Government should be a Federation of all India embracing both the Indian States and British India in a bi-cameral legislature."

All these opinions led to the conclusion that the Federation would constitute India into a Federal State and not merely a League or Confederation of British India and Indian States; not a *Staatenbund* but a *Bundesstaat*; "not a mere League of States (which does not make a State at all) but a union of people over whom a Central power will have a certain amount of direct authority."

The Gandhi-Irwin Pact had also laid down that the object of future discussions between Great Britain and India was to consider "the scheme for the constitutional Government of India discussed at the Round Table Conference." Then followed these words: "Of the scheme there outlined, Federation is an essential part; so also are Indian responsibility and reservations or safeguards in the interests of India."

This pact, for a moment, had committed the country to a Federal form of government. And though my ardent nationalism yearned for a unitary form of government, I could not resist the conclusion that for uniting and developing new areas in India on democratic lines, a Federation offered the only substitute to a bureaucratic administration. It provided a bulwark against a despotic power at Delhi and the only solution for the Indian States, which wished to join British India in a closer union without losing their own identity.

CHAPTER XXIV

A Political Gamble

THE Princes were averse to a healthy Federation. They were willing to join the Federation, only as long as the Congress was out of it. The Gandhi-Irwin Truce led to new alignments. The group of Indian Princes, led by the late Maharaja of Patiala, who were at one time for Federation, were now against it. If the Princes joined the Federation, they would have to bid good-bye to irresponsibility; to the dreams of unrestrained sovereignty; to an unlimited privy purse and a reckless disregard of the popular will. They could not join the Federation and at the same time remain clogs to the wheel of progress, which, in effect, they were.

The group of Princes led by the Maharaja of Bikaner, however, knew the danger of ignoring the onrushing storm, which was threatening to overtake the Princely Order. The Bikaner group knew very well that political India was out to acquire freedom. It realized that mere fêtes and dinners to officials could not let them rule in security as in the past and so sought to perpetuate its existence by swimming with the current, instead of against the current. This group of Princes wanted to secure the benefits of a Federation, without surrendering its privileges.

The Maharaja of Bikaner himself had been reconciled only to a polite but distant friendship with political India. At a dinner, which he gave in Bombay to leading politicians of all political parties, I was invited to speak for the Congress group, but I could see that my remarks about the

fundamentals of a powerful Federation did not evoke much enthusiasm in that motley gathering.

> The most striking and pervading characteristic of a Federation, according to Bryce, no doubt, was "the existence of a double government, a double allegiance, a double patriotism"; it was not unity but certainly a union; and certainly not a confederation. Under such a scheme the Central Government would act, as in all Federal States, not only upon the federating units but also directly upon their citizens.

These wholesome principles were, however, unacceptable to the Princes. The Princes wanted to have a well-defined share in the Government of India and, at the same time, to maintain with reference to British India, the position of Sovereign States which they did not enjoy under the principles governing Federal constitutions. The English lawyers who, however, advised them, had claimed for them Sovereign status—a convenient fiction which it suited the British statesmen, for the time being, to support. For, political India had to be checkmated under any circumstances. The Liberal British Indian statesmen admitted the claim in the fond hope that, once it was accepted, the Princes would range themselves with them for demanding the transfer of power from British to Indian hands.

The fact that the Indian States have not been Sovereign States at any time was conveniently forgotten. Under the Foreign Jurisdiction and Extradition Act, the Government of India interfered with their autonomy. As a paramount Power, it interpreted treaties; decided all controversies arising between itself and a State or between a State and a State; deprived a ruler temporarily or permanently of any of his rights, dignities, powers or privileges; debarred from succession the heir-apparent or any other member

of the ruler's family; exercised, through its own officers, political superintendence; enforced peace and good order in the State; intervened in the internal affairs of the State, and, if necessary, carried out the functions of the State; administered the States during the minority of the ruler; settled disputes between the rulers and persons holding land from them; and interfered in some glaring cases of gross misrule. The truth was never stated more bluntly than by Lord Reading in his famous letter dated March 27, 1926, to H. E. H. the Nizam: "The sovereignty of the British Crown is supreme in India, and therefore no ruler of an Indian State can justifiably claim to negotiate with the British Government on equal footing."

Thus the actual relation between the Government of India as representing the British Parliament or the British Crown and the Indian States was, and still is, that between a more centralized Federal Government and its component States.

It was easy to realize the jealousy, the conflict of interests and loyalties, and the unsettled existence which a loosely knit Federation of British India and Indian States would give rise to. And, if the States combined with the Governor-General, British India's only remedy would be to commence a desperate struggle by means of "direct action" before it could achieve real Federation. Thus, the Federal Government would be divided against itself, unable to stimulate or consolidate the constructive forces in the nation; a prey to ceaseless intrigues; impotent as to the "Reserved" compartment, feeble as to the "Federal," and partly unrepresentative as to the "Central"; a misshapen three-headed monster.

The other feature of the proposed Federal scheme was the position of the Viceroy. The Viceroy was to remain the military dictator of India; the master of the destinies of the Princes by virtue of the doctrine of Paramountcy; the controller of 70 per cent. of the country's finances; its ex-officio representative in all external relations; the arbiter of its Currency and Exchange. Under these circumstances, to call the proposed Federal Government responsible, was a mockery. It set up a rule by a bureaucracy. With such a Legislature and Viceroy, as the Federal scheme contemplated, it would be undiluted Autocracy.

CHAPTER XXV

Gandhiji's Embassy

ON August 26, 1931, the late Mr. Ramsay MacDonald dissolved the Labour Cabinet and formed his National Government with the Conservatives as its main support. Captain Wedgwood Benn, who was sympathetic to India, as the Labour Secretary of State, had made room for a Conservative, Sir Samuel Hoare, as the head of the India Office in the National Government. The second session of the Round Table Conference opened in London on September 7, 1931. Gandhiji arrived in London on September 12, 1931. So, when Gandhiji joined the Round Table Conference to implement the Gandhi-Irwin Truce, the other party to the contract, both in London and at Delhi, was its sworn enemy. In October, a "national emergency" General Election in Britain left the National Government in command of nine-tenths of the House of Commons.

The principal factor concerned with the Indian constitutional controversies—Gandhiji—was, however, made light of by the delegates at the second session of the Round Table Conference, which Gandhiji attended as the sole delegate representing the Congress. In consequence, Gandhiji had to plough a lonely furrow. It was the nationalists in India who had during 1930 waged a successful war against the allied strength of the British, the Princes, the communalists and the reactionaries. The nationalists had looked with high disfavour on the oppressive methods which many of the Indian Princes

adopted towards their subjects. The State subjects themselves were astir, with a mighty discontent.

When the Gandhi-Irwin Pact accepted a Federation, it was understood by the nationalists to mean the establishment of an All-India Federal State, which would, subject to the reservations agreed upon, possess powers and functions similar to those exercised by the Government of India and the Secretary of State over the Provinces as well as the States. Such a Federal State would imply a Federal Executive; a Federal Legislature; Federal subjects and Federal revenue, a Federal Supreme Court to interpret the Constitution and to decide the extent of the Federal and State powers and the State powers *inter se*; a distribution of powers for the most part capable of being exercised directly on all the citizens of India by the Federal and the State Governments independently of each other : in short, a Government which Sir H. Parkes had described with reference to Australia, thus:

> The Federal Government must be a Government of power. It must be a Government especially armed with plenary power for the defence of the country. It must be a Government armed with plenary power for the performance of other functions pertaining to National Government, such as the building of ships, the enlistment of soldiers, and the carrying out of many works in the industrial world, which might be necessary for the advancement of a nation. It must be wise that some of these powers should come into force with the concurrence of the State or Provincial Legislatures. It might be wise to stipulate for some kind of gradation in approaching the full powers of the Federal Government or before consummating its full power, but that it should be in design, from the very first, a complete legislative

and executive Government, suited to perform the grandest and the highest functions of a nation, could not be a matter of doubt.

But at the second session of the Round Table Conference, no one cared for truths which modern political experience had discovered and which Gandhiji represented. A Government without a nation was the survival of a barbaric age doomed to extinction; a nation without its own Government was a calamity to be avoided. There can be a commonwealth of nations, in which the Governments of free nations could voluntarily associate with each other, parting with some power for the common good. But a Federal Government like the one devised by the first Round Table Conference, was a makeshift; a half-way house between a National Government and an involuntary alliance of rival Governments, a compromise between the claims of the nation to have one Government, and the contesting claims of existing Governments, which exercised divided power over it.

The transitory nature of such makeshifts was, however, not realized by anyone. Where the national bond was strong, as Gandhiji had forged it, Federal Governments would always tend to take a unitary form. The reason for the development of this tendency is simple. In modern times, a Government can little hope to exist without the support of the aggressively politically-minded section of a nation, much less to exist efficiently. And, where this support has to be given through a House of Representatives, which controls the purse and decides the fate of the Executive, it becomes the only source of power and strength. It furnishes the bond which prevents the constituent States from falling away from one another. And, hence a Federal Government with responsibility, in the

course of a few decades, inevitably leads to the formation of a strong National Government.

Gandhiji's co-workers in India watched the proceedings of the second session of the Round Table Conference with a sad heart. Alone, in that crowd of Princes, titled Liberals and insatiate communalists, Gandhiji stood and voiced the nation's demand. But, it was a voice in the wilderness. The shrewd Briton played his game, and Gandhiji had to confess that he and others did not understand the same words in the same sense. Sir Samuel Hoare and those of his way of thinking, were only anxious to work up a Federation which would cement Britain's alliance with the Indian Princes in order to keep India safe from the Congress. To the British public, Gandhiji's was a single voice as against that of many ; and that too of a crank who lived in the East End and walked the streets of December London in bare *chappals* ! Many and varied have been the opportunities, when England could have made a permanent friend of India. But the diplomacy of Britain has always been devoid of imagination or dramatic sense.

When I followed the proceedings of the second session of the Round Table Conference, I understood the difficulties which faced Indian political ambition.

The British power at the Centre alone kept up the illusion that India as a whole was a nation and that in reality we had in the Princes and the communal rivalries a real obstacle to overcome, before national solidarity could be achieved.

India cannot be a Dominion. Its internal complexity and its international frontiers by land and by sea made it more than a Dominion, if the British army and navy

were replaced by the Indian substitutes and less than a Dominion, if the British army and navy were retained.

I struggled hard against these truths, but I found no escape from them. And the only possible alternative appeared to be an All-India Federation with the Army and External Affairs of the whole Commonwealth concentrated in the hands of a Super Federal Council, on which India, of its free choice, would be represented equally with the Dominions. It was not only the substance of Independence, but the only Independence, which was possible to India. If this was the only possible way out of the difficulties which beset us, Gandhiji's technique appeared to be the only means to find it.

CHAPTER XXVI

The Aftermath

BEFORE Gandhiji returned to India, Lord Willingdon (the then Viceroy) had made up his mind to force a fight on the Congress. So had Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. An appeal to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to stay his hand, till Gandhiji returned, was met by a prompt and indignant rejection ; and just a few days before Gandhiji returned, the policy of non-payment of revenue was adopted by the U.P. Congress Committee. This was followed by the arrest of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Mr. T. K. Sherwani, a Muslim Congress leader and a co-worker of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. In the North West Frontier Province, the Khan brothers, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan (popularly called the Frontier Gandhi) and his brother Dr. Khan Saheb (Congress Premier during the years 1937-39) were also arrested. Ordinances were brought into force in the United Provinces, the North West Frontier and Bengal.

On December 28, 1931, Gandhiji returned to Bombay, empty-handed, baffled, but determined to work out the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. Bombay gave him the most splendid ovation I have ever seen it giving. Gandhiji was very hopeful. He had acquired a curious kind of confidence, even in Sir Samuel Hoare, whom many of us considered as the arch-enemy of Indian aspirations. Gandhiji thought him to be genuine. "If Sir Samuel was convinced that we were fit for a larger measure of self-government," Gandhiji said, "he would have no hesitation in giving it." He

thought that if he could discuss matters with the Viceroy, a crisis could easily be averted.

But Lord Willingdon had made up his mind. A request by Gandhiji for an interview with the Viceroy to discuss the general situation was unceremoniously turned down. By the night of January 3, 1932, all avenues of a dignified approach were closed by the Government of India.

That evening, my old mother, in spite of her age and inability to walk, attended Gandhiji's prayers. When he was leaving the grounds, he asked her whether she was prepared for my being sent to jail again. With the charming directness which characterized her, she replied : "I have entrusted my son to you." She came home courageously prepared to resume charge of my rather large household, which she had given up some years ago on account of failing health and eyesight. "I won't die till you return," she cheerfully assured me.

The city of Bombay that day (January 3, 1932) was rife with rumours of Gandhiji's arrest. We all sat up later than usual. He was as cheerful as ever. He told us of his none too favourable impressions of Signor Mussolini. Then he rested, while we waited for his arrest, which was reported to be imminent. In the early morning of January 4, 1932, he was arrested.

The city was in a ferment. All kinds of wild rumours were afloat. We were to be carried away to Mandalay. We were to be interned with our families on some island in the Arabian Sea. Few had arranged their personal affairs. The time was taken up in making hasty preparations so that the struggle may be carried on in our absence.

In the afternoon of January 4, 1932, the Ordinances* were published. From about 4 a.m. in the early morning of the 5th, the telephone brought me the news of my comrades being picked up and of mass arrests. We got our things ready and bade good-bye to our children and my mother. At 5-30 a.m. on January 5, 1932, our turn came.

About a hundred prominent Congressmen in the city were arrested under the Ordinances and locked up.

A reign of terror was then proclaimed in India. Lord Willingdon was carrying out his long cherished desire to kill the Congress.

* These declared the Congress and allied organizations illegal see page 128.

CHAPTER XXVII

Again a Convict !

WITH a few others, I was also considered too dangerous to be given an open trial in Bombay, and so, one night, we were stolen out to the small town of Bijapur in the south of the Bombay Presidency. We were locked up in a jail which was a caravanserai in the days of the Adilshahi kings of Bijapur. Later, we were let out for a day on the condition of our giving parole to the police. We failed to observe this injunction, as the authorities knew we would. We were placed on our trial for the failure to report ourselves to the police officer, who was, at the material time, sitting with us to place us under arrest. We pleaded guilty, and according to form, I was sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment. The Magistrate was too embarrassed to look at us all the time that we were before him, and profusely apologised for having had to do such an unpleasant duty. " What am I to do, sir? I am a poor man!" he pleaded. We bore the convicting Magistrate no ill-will.

The Bijapur Jail then contained about three hundred odd prisoners, out of whom over two hundred were political prisoners. In a few days, the authorities found the " politicals " difficult to manage and I found myself in the rôle of a mediator between them and the Superintendent. Among the prisoners, there were a few Gandhians, quiet, unassuming, devoted to their work, and a few budding Communists who, later, studied Trotsky's Revolution in the certain belief that the Gandhian

regime being over, the followers of Marx would inherit the earth. The rest were just Congressmen, driven to jail by enthusiasm for *Swaraj* and inspired with a confidence in Gandhiji's miraculous power of bringing about unexpected compromises, which would lead to a general amnesty. We studied Hindi, and held prayers, while the volunteers drilled, as if it were a Congress camp. The rigours of jail life were tempered by the anxiety of the officials not to drive us to a mass hunger-strike, which some of us expressed ourselves ready to resort to, if our self-respect was in danger.

I also read profusely, and wrote several books in Gujarati and one in English, " Gujarata and its Literature," which I had planned years before.

My troubles commenced when the Bombay Government, in a fit of petty vindictiveness, reduced me from the "A" class to the "B" class, among the prisoners. The prisoners were divided into three categories, " A," " B " and " C," according to the official view of their standard of living, status and environment, before conviction. The "A" class was equivalent to a simple detention. The " C " class involved all the rigours of prison life. The " B " class was just a small improvement over the " C " class, with a majority of the prison rigours retained in their full severity. With my constitution and the habit of living principally on milk and fruits, I had to manage with large quantities of wheat bread and rice, which were flung at me, morning and evening, and which I could not but discard. Soon, I lost weight and developed fever and neuritis. By the end of 1932 and in the beginning of 1933, I went out of jail twice on parole, on account of the serious illness, once of my mother and another time of my son. When outside, the neuritic condition of my hand

was brought to the notice of the then Home Member; he permitted me, on my return to jail, to have every kind of food, which my health required, at my expense. That relieved me of a difficulty, which would have otherwise impaired my health for life.

Month after month, to continue in the same room with the same company, was nerve racking and many of us had nervous breakdowns. Some of us quarrelled without rhyme or reason. A little less of sugar or salt would send any of us into a fit of temper. Luckily, the absorbing interest which I had in doing literary work, generally kept me from falling a victim of this disease, which we named as "jailitis." In spite of this endemic, the jail was not without its humour. We had our classes in astrology, a subject which never failed to interest us in our monotonous life. Then, we became friendly with peons and habituals, who took some of us into confidence with regard to their affairs. On the whole, it was a period of wonderful experience.



A QUIET TALK

Mrs. Gandhi, Gandhiji, Miss Maniben Patel, Mr. Mathuradas Trikamji, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the author and Mrs. Munshi.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A New Crusade

WITHIN six months of our arrest, the movement outside began to flag. New methods of suppressing the National Movement were invented, heavy fines were inflicted, and lands were freely confiscated. And they told.

In September 1932 Gandhiji decided to resist with his life the Communal Decision, popularly known as the Communal Award, made by the Prime Minister of England, in so far as it split the Harijans from other Hindus by extending to them separate electorates. Gandhiji's fast unto death began on September 20 and ended on the 26th, when that part of the Communal Decision was substituted by the formula settled between the representative Hindus. Gandhiji had saved the Hindu community from a disastrous destruction, by non-violent resistance, of which there had been no parallel before.

Then began Gandhiji's single-handed crusade against Untouchability. In November 1932 Gandhiji obtained permission to conduct the Harijan Movement from within the jail, to receive visitors and to write freely.

Gandhiji's work in the cause of Harijans (untouchables) during the year 1933 furnishes one of the most glorious chapters in the history of modern Hindu revival. In May 1933 Gandhiji went on a 21 days' fast at the call of God. The voice which invited him to fast was " unmistakable as some human voice definitely speaking to me and irresistible." When I read this, the line of thought which

I was pursuing with regard to *Isvarapranidhana,* "Surrender, to God," seemed to be justified. I was confirmed in the conclusion, to which I was slowly being drawn, that God could be known by experience and not by logic, but to the man who had come to know Him, He is a reality. In May 1933 Gandhiji suspended the Civil Disobedience Movement for six weeks and again for a similar period. In July 1933 the Mass Civil Disobedience, which for all practical purposes had come to an end, was formally discontinued, restricting the right to offer civil disobedience to those persons only who were ready to suffer and who were prepared to offer it on their own responsibility. Gandhiji, who had been shocked by the secret methods which were then being followed by Congressmen, also forbade them.

At this time, Gandhiji was seriously exercised over the instruments with which he was to secure the uplift of the Harijans. In one of his letters he said—

> It is difficult to live for the Harijan. It is still more difficult to be qualified to die for him. Satyanarayan makes cowards of us all. How fastidious He is ? He demands spotless sheep, the best of offerings, the heads of sinless men. Where shall I bring them from ? Even if a single unworthy thought passes his mind, he becomes disqualified. But I cannot leave Him. This Poet, of all Poets, is so jealous that He does not permit the worship of any other poet. Where shall I go and complain about all this ?

It is relevant to record the principal events of the period. Gandhiji was released in May 1933, as soon as he entered upon the 21 days' fast, already referred to. In August 1933 Gandhiji decided to initiate individual Civil Disobedience in his own person. He was arrested, tried and sentenced

to one year's imprisonment. Gandhiji entered upon a fast, soon after his conviction, to vindicate, what he claimed to be, a prisoner's privileges. The Bombay Government let Gandhiji fast till his health was giving way under the strain and then released him. Gandhiji then imposed on himself a restraint, that for a period of one year, he would devote himself exclusively to the organization of the movement for the removal of Untouchability, popularly known as the Harijan Movement. " Harijan " is an expression coined by Gandhiji to indicate the untouchables in the Hindu community.

Pursuant to his vow, to work exclusively for the Harijan Movement, Gandhiji conducted a campaign throughout the country for the removal of Untouchability; and within so short a time as one year, defied time, space and the demands of health to carry to the remote villages his message of hope to the socially submerged.

History knows of a Buddha preaching his gospel of *Nirvana* far and wide in the course of a long life and a Peter, the Hermit, delivering his fiery message of the Crusade across Europe; but this generation has seen with its eyes what centuries have found it difficult to imagine; a Prophet, in one year, by his inspiration, stimulating the conscience of so vast and slow-moving a society as the Hindus, and reshaping the life of millions.

CHAPTER XXIX

The Beginnings of Parliamentarism

IMMEDIATELY on my release in December 1933 I went to see Gandhiji at Madras, where he had proceeded in connection with the Harijan Movement.

The situation in the country was deplorable. Few came forward to offer *satyagraha.* Political life was all but dead. The people were terror-struck. Congressmen smarted under a sense of defeat. But I was struck by the overwhelming reception which the city of Madras, that home of Orthodoxy, gave Gandhiji. Wherever he moved, Gandhiji carried with him enthusiasm and hope, so refreshing in the surrounding gloom. People seemed to have shed the fear that had seized them, and they met in their thousands to welcome and hear him. The mammoth meeting at Madras which he addressed, and where I was present, was attended by over a lakh of men, women and children and was reported to be one of the biggest mass gatherings ever held in that city. This was very heartening, and showed that his hold on the mass mind was as strong as ever, in spite of what the Government reports sent to England said.

My friend and host in Madras, the late Mr. A. Rangaswamy Iyengar, discussed with me the question of restarting the Swaraj Party in order to rescue the country from the slough of despond. My faith in parliamentary activity had remained unshaken, and I offered co-operation, if Gandhiji approved. We prepared a draft scheme which, when placed before Gandhiji, met his approval. Mr. Rangaswamy Iyengar and myself put ourselves in touch

with Dr. Ansari and Dr. Bidhan Roy and several other leaders. But Mr. Rangaswamy Iyengar, in the meantime, fell ill, and within a few days, his death removed the moving spirit of the plan. Few knew at the time that Gandhiji had been consulted, and no one had the courage openly to suggest for adoption by the country, the Council Programme, commonly held to be a heresy in the Gandhian political world.

Even the circular issued by Dr. Ansari to convene a small meeting had to be colourless, though he was quite emphatic about the need of parliamentary activity. " It seems," he wrote to me, " a sheer waste of time and energy to call a meeting, unless, as I have suggested to you in a previous letter and to Dr. B. C. Roy and others, that some few of you should meet and decide to restart the Swaraj Party." Since 1921, Parliamentary Activity had been looked upon in the Congress circles as an inferior class of work, which weaker men may be graciously permitted to do. Some friends in Bombay were not slow to point a finger of scorn at me as the "man who wanted to go to the Council."

About thirty of us met at Dr. Ansari's house at Delhi on March 31 and April 1, 1934. On the eve of the meeting, the position was carefully reviewed. We were unanimous that there was no alternative but to start the Swaraj Party. Gandhiji's letter to Dr. Ansari and to myself were again read to ascertain that he had no objection to the course that we were adopting. Mr. Rangaswamy Iyengar's draft, which Gandhiji himself revised, was then adopted as the basis. Dr. Ansari had then just been informed that the Government of India proposed to hold the elections to the Central Assembly in October or November next, in order to catch the Congress weak and unprepared, and he suggested that the proposed Swaraj Party should

contest the elections. Many of those present were first taken aback. The anti-parliamentarian complex took some time to be overcome. The next morning most of us agreed that, in the situation in which we were, Dr. Ansari's suggestion was the only one which could be adopted. Mr. Bhulabhai Desai accepted the chairmanship of the meeting, which by a large majority resolved to start the party and to contest the elections, provided the plan had Gandhiji's wholehearted approval and blessings. The avowal of faith in Gandhiji's judgment and leadership, at this meeting, was remarkable. Indeed, it was decided not to publish the resolution till it had been seen and approved of by Gandhiji.

Next day, Dr. Ansari, Mr. Bhulabhai Desai and Dr. Bidhan Roy left for Patna to obtain Gandhiji's approval, which he gave. Independently of this and without being so much as aware that the Delhi meeting had decided on contesting the elections subject to his approval, Gandhiji formally advised suspension of Civil Disobedience at the same time (April 1934).

In May 1934 we met again, this time at Ranchi, which place was selected solely with a view to ensuring Gandhiji's presence to found the Swaraj Party formally.

In one of his letters, Gandhiji defined his attitude towards the proposed Swaraj Party:

> I also realize the dangers which you refer to, which beset the entry into the Councils. Still, I believe that the thing will remain with us for ever. Such a Parliamentary Party is sure to be in the Congress fold. I have come to believe that to disregard it is both impossible and improper. That is why, I propose to give as much help as I can to develop this side. But, it will not go well

with the Civil Disobedience. How can I give direct assistance, if I am in jail? My being in jail may, perhaps, give it importance.

I am not inclined to press anyone to join it. There is a possibility of my remaining outside.

We can only derive benefit if firm, capable, selfless and self-sacrificing men and women join it. But, many such men will not feel interested in the intricacies of legislative assemblies. My idea of democracy is quite different. It can be created outside, not inside, a Parliament. When it is really created, a proper Parliament will follow. Everywhere, Democracy is dragged at the heels of Parliaments and has come to nothing. I want a Parliament which follows the people. I do not see the proper atmosphere for it, but in my opinion such an atmosphere is being created. The progress achieved by Civil Disobedience has not been negligible. I do not repent of a single step which I have taken in connection with it. Each step has been taken at the proper time. I firmly believe that I have not taken those steps, but Satyanarayan has got me to take them. I have let myself be dragged as He wished.

The parliamentary activity, like Civil Disobedience, will remain an inseparable and self-sufficient wing of the Congress. It will not be a stepchild. But I do not know at present how far I will be able to take interest in it. Constructive work has merged in Civil Disobedience. I fully understand them both. But in the domain of parliamentary work, I have been dragged only by the love of friends and the prevailing atmosphere. As to the other two, I feel myself competent, but not as to this one. Let us see what happens.

A meeting of the All-India Congress Committee was then convened at Patna in the middle of May 1934. Once the cat was belled and parliamentary activity was blessed by Gandhiji, many leading Congressmen expressed the view that the Swaraj Party should be wound up and the Congress itself should undertake parliamentary activity. By a large majority, the All-India Congress Committee accepted the parliamentary programme and appointed a Parliamentary Board, suspending formally the Civil Disobedience campaign. This led the Government of India to secure the annulment by the Provincial Governments of the many notifications issued by them under the Ordinances or the local Special Emergency Powers Acts, declaring the Congress and many auxiliary and allied organizations throughout the country illegal. This enabled the Congress organizations to resume their normal activities.

CHAPTER XXX

GANDHIJI RETIRES

IT was decided to hold a plenary session of the Congress at Bombay in October 1934. This was the first formal plenary session to be convened since the Karachi Congress (March 1931). The Congress organizations were notified to be unlawful associations early in January 1932 and continued to remain under that ban till after May 1934, when the notifications were annulled. But to organize the Congress, when political enthusiasm was running low, was an uphill task, especially as it had to be performed in a very short time. Bombay, however, was true to its traditions. A magnificent Congress was held at Worli and over two lakhs of persons attended.

The main purpose of the Congress was to enable Gandhiji to get back the threads of political life in the country in his hands. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel had just come out of jail. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was still in prison. Congressmen were demoralized. Many outspokenly declared that Gandhiji's methods had failed. A few young men, with self-assurance born of inexperience, were getting ready to take upon themselves the burden of the Congress, which they thought would soon be transferred to their energetic shoulders.

It was easy for Gandhiji to get the plenary session of the Bombay Congress to endorse the parliamentary programme accepted by the All-India Congress Committee at Patna. No doubt there were dissentients and the parliamentarians

were told in unmistakable terms that they were not the right and courageous kind of Congressmen.

Gandhiji also brought before the plenary session, proposals to amend the Congress Constitution, as to reduce the size of the Congress and the All-India Congress Committee. For four days Mr. Kishorilal Mashruvala and myself worked at the constitution under Gandhiji's direction from early morning till late at night. Gandhiji was, as usual, indefatigable. Ultimately the final draft was produced the day before it was to be placed before the open session. It was a Sunday and it was impossible to have the whole of that constitution printed for the information of the members of the Congress.

Gandhiji proceeded with the typed draft to the rostrum to move the resolution by which the whole of the constitution of the Congress was to be drastically altered. He spoke for over an hour, partly in English, partly in Hindi. He prefaced his speech by saying that there was no copy available for the members. He asked them to take the substance from him and appealed to the members to impose on themselves a self-denying ordinance by cutting down their numbers. The vast assemblage heard him breathlessly. The wonderful fascination, which he exercised over it, won for the new constitution an overwhelming support. I was asked to second the resolution. On account of the strain I had undergone, I was scarcely fit to speak, and I remember to have made perhaps the clumsiest speech of my life.

Gandhiji had already declared, in September 1934, his decision to withdraw from the Congress and cease to be even a four-anna member, after the Bombay session of the

Congress was over. He did not desire to leave the Congress without reorganizing it on a more compact and efficient basis.

In the open session, when Gandhiji's decision to withdraw from the Congress was mentioned, everyone felt as if he was parting from a beloved father, for ever. Many appealed to him to reconsider the decision, but he was inexorable. He ceased to be the official leader of the Congress, to become, as we know, its friend, philosopher and guide.

CHAPTER XXXI

An Interlude

THE elections to the Indian Legislative Assembly were fixed for November 14, 1934. The elections were contested by the Congress officially, under the supervision of the Parliamentary Board. I served as a Secretary to the Parliamentary Board.

The City of Bombay is a constituency returning two members to the Assembly. First, it was decided that the Congress should contest only one out of the two general seats, which the city of Bombay had. Mr. K. F. Nariman, the President of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee, was nominated a candidate, the other was left free for Sir Cowasji Jehangir, the Liberal candidate. But when Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel came out of jail, he scanned the list of voters and felt that it would not be difficult to secure both the seats. I declined to stand for personal reasons, and Dr. Deshmukh was nominated as the other candidate.

Later, how Mr. Nariman's interest cooled off, how he withdrew from the candidature a few hours before the date of nomination, how I was pitchforked as the second candidate and what happened thereafter are part of a very unpleasant episode. The Congress enthusiasm in the city was roused to white heat. On the election day, it was expected that both the Congress candidates would come out successful, but I lost by a few votes. The count of votes showed that, if the extra votes of the successful Congress candidate had been equally distributed between

both the Congress candidates, both would have been returned. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's intuition was not, therefore, wrong.

I continued to function as a Secretary of the Parliamentary Board for some time, but not being a member of the Indian Legislative Assembly, I was of very little use to the Board. Later, the Parliamentary Board was substituted by the Parliamentary Sub-Committee of the Congress Working Committee.

In 1935 the political life in the Congress, except for the parliamentary work, was far from encouraging. Many of the provincial committees were torn by internal dissensions. The Socialists were more determined and vocal than ever and tried to oust the Gandhians from the committees. The Gandhians were torn by divided counsel and were going back to some kind of constructive work. Some of them, fully alive to their strength, smarted under the attack of these youngsters, but, for want of a lead from Gandhiji, could not give them a straight fight.

Gandhiji was detached. "Some of their (Socialists') things are acceptable to us," he wrote. "I think that wherever there are differences of principles, we should point them out and remain quiet. To the extent to which there is no difference, let them go ahead. Why should we not cultivate the confidence that, where there is difference, their work is not going to go forward?"

This was a Mahatmic perception, which was fully justified by later events, and which many Congressmen could not foresee.

CHAPTER XXXII

The Language Problem in India

IN the month of April 1935 I accompanied Gandhiji to Indore where he was to preside over the Hindi *Sahitya Sammelan*. I then realized the strength of the movement which Gandhiji was sponsoring for a national language for India. He inspired the Hindi *Sammelan* and guided the *Dakshina* Hindi *Prachar Sabha*, which was doing splendid work in South India.

A bitter controversy had been raging then in the United Provinces between the protagonists of Sanskritic Hindi and Persianised Urdu, and even those who did not know the merits of the question entered the lists with the fury of ignorance.

But really speaking, Hindi and Urdu were not different languages. Leaving aside the small educated section, the people of the United Provinces spoke only one language in which the Sanskritic, Persian and the local elements were found in varying degrees. He who used a large proportion of Persian words, was said to speak Urdu. He who used a larger proportion of Sanskritic or local words, was said to speak Hindi. The man in the street used only the words common to ordinary human intercourse, irrespective of the source from which they come. This living language was styled by the census officers as Hindustani, by the Hindus as Hindi, and by the Muslims as Urdu.

Dr. Hutton in the Census Report says :

> In the case of the spoken language admittedly the use of the terms Hindi and Urdu give rise to embittered controversy between two schools which are, generally speaking, coterminous with Hinduism and Islam in religion. In point of practice, it is impossible to define any boundary between Urdu and Hindi, as spoken, since the difference consists merely in a preference for a Persian or for a Sanskrit vocabulary, and as an illiterate man uses only the language of common speech, it is, generally, the bias of the enumerator, which would determine the category of his return.

For centuries, a form of Hindi with a vocabulary of predominantly Sanskritic words, had been the language of literature. Even Muslim authors like Malik Mahomed Jayasi, Abdul Rahim Khanakhana, the Minister of Emperor Akbar, and Yari Saheb had enriched it. When modern education was introduced and Hindu authors began to produce literature, naturally they turned to the resources of this language and of Sanskrit. The result was that their language largely came under the influence of Sanskrit. This was the literary Hindi of to-day. It could easily be understood in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Bengal and Central Provinces. It could be followed to some extent by persons whose mother-tongue was Kannada, Telugu or Malayalam, and who had studied a little Hindi.

The Hindi which was spoken in the army of the Moghul Emperors came to be called Urdu. It differed from Hindustani or the literary Hindi, in so far as it possessed a larger stock of words of Persian origin. In modern times, when Muslim literary men began to compose literature, they naturally turned for inspiration to the Persian and Arabic literature, which were easily accessible to them. In

the result, the literary Urdu became Persianised and drifted away from Hindustani and literary Hindi. This language was used and understood only by a section of Hindus and Muslims in the United Provinces and learned Muslims in other provinces. To those outside, who could easily understand literary Hindi or Hindustani, it was far from easily comprehensible.

The evolution of Sanskritic literary Hindi and Persianised literary Urdu was a natural growth in which neither hostility nor communalism entered in the earlier stages. It was not easy to arrest this growth. If a Hindi writer wrote a love lyric or a historical romance he could only seek inspiration from Jayadev, Vyas or Valmiki ; if a Muslim writer pursued the literary art, to whom would he go, in the ordinary course, except to Sa'di and Hafiz ?

These two currents would not meet till Hindustani, the medium of intercourse in the United Provinces, became sufficiently enriched to be the language of literature. If Hindi and Urdu works are translated or transcribed into each other freely, this result would be easily achieved.

Before the British came, Hindu writers did not hesitate to use Persian words, and Muslim writers had no distaste for Sanskritic words. Unfortunately for us, political and religious distrust have led the Hindu writer to eschew Persian words and the Muslim writer to avoid Sanskrit words. If the writers of both the communities use the best words irrespective of their source, the gulf between Sanskritic Hindi and Persianised Urdu would be easily bridged. This question is a part of the larger Hindu-Muslim problem and will be solved only when the Hindus and the Mussalmans evolve harmony by close social and cultural contact.

A variety of Hindustani was spoken by Muslims in different provinces outside the United Provinces. It approached Urdu in Hyderabad (Deccan), was more or less Gujarati and Marathi in Maharashtra. I had also heard its Kannada variety in the Bijapur Jail. In the same way when men and women tried to acquire Hindustani as a national language, they only fitted the Sanskritic elements of their own mother-tongue into the framework of Hindi grammatical forms.

CHAPTER XXXIII

A Problem of Scripts

LOOKING to all the experiments in the evolution of a national language, it was clear that the Hindustani which was the medium of intercourse in the United Provinces was a language by itself. It was a living mother-tongue and it was not and could not be a living language for the whole of India.

But outside the United Provinces, Punjab and the North West Frontier Province, the national language was a language, the content of which was Sanskritic and the formal structure Hindi. Social intercourse in these provinces, therefore, would always be through the mother-tongue; our creative art would only express itself through it. But as the forces of Nationalism became more powerful, as Science continued to bring different parts of India closer, as the culture and life of the country became uniform, this national language would become more and more a living language. But it could never be nor was it intended to be a substitute for the mother-tongue. When this national language became the language of intercourse for the whole of India, its vocabulary would become enriched and comprehensive; it would also acquire many European words. Perhaps, decades hence, when social intercourse between Indians became closer, all these elements would have been harmonized and a living national language born. Then the controversy between Urdu and Hindi, and between Sanskrit and Persian would have faded away.

In this connection the question of script was very important. If we had one script in the provinces in which Bengali, Hindi, Marathi and Gujarati are spoken, the residents of all these provinces would be able to read works easily in all the four languages. In other provinces, people who could read the national language would also be able to understand these works. This script could only be the Devanagari.

The difference of opinion on this subject between the Hindus and Muslims had to be taken note of. It was no use hoping that the Muslims would abandon the Urdu script and accept ours. The Hindus themselves even had not got one script between them. How then was it possible to teach Devanagari and Urdu to all educated persons? The only practical solution of the problem was that Devanagari should be accepted by those who could do so easily. Then the only question left would be whether the compromise between Devanagari and Urdu should be effected by a use of two optional scripts or by the adoption of a common Roman script. Even to-day the Gujaratis write Devanagari without the top strokes. The little change which some five or six letters had undergone in the Gujarati alphabet could easily be removed. Many Hindi and Marathi-speaking persons used the alphabet without the top strokes and if such a change was accepted by different provinces, a great advance could be achieved.

These problems may be presented from the statistical point of view, according to the census of 1931.

1. Those who use Indian languages in India 34,98,88,000

2. (*a*) Those who speak languages of the Sanskritic family 25,37,12,000

(*b*) Those whose mother-tongue is Hindustani	12,02,39,000
(*c*) Those who can easily understand Hindi-Hindustani	11,00,00,000
(*d*) Those who speak languages which are generally written in the Devanagari script	11,11,29,000
(*e*) Those who speak languages which are written in some form of Devanagari	9,33,51,000
3. Those who speak Dravidian languages with Sanskritic predominance	4,67,18,000
4. Those who speak Dravidian languages mixed with Sanskrit	2,14,12,000

From another point of view, the question may be presented in this way: Out of 10,000 men in India—

(*a*) 9,982 speak Indian languages;

(*b*) 7,235 speak languages of the Sanskritic family, the literature and vocabulary of which have been shaped mainly by Sanskrit;

(*c*) 4,053 of these use languages which are written in the Devanagari script;

(*d*) 2,662 use languages which are written in some form of Devanagari, that is, in all 6,715 persons can easily accept the Devanagari script.

In the nature of things, the medium for the commonwealth of Indian literature can only be based on an element common to all the languages of the Sanskritic family and to the Dravidian languages which are dominated by Sanskrit, fitted into the framework of Hindustani.

Through this language, the literature of all provinces and of Urdu can be brought into an inter-provincial exchange; and every provincial as well as Urdu literature can draw upon it as much as it likes; and in the end the literature and culture of India would attain harmony. This would be the field of activity for an All-India *Sahitya Parishad.* To draw the wealth collected in this exchange into Urdu and to bring Urdu literature to this exchange must be the principal function of the Hindustani Associations of the United Provinces.

But all these activities left the field of the provincial *Parishads* untouched. Social intercourse and creative art were only possible through the medium of the mother-tongue. Other languages were like stepmothers ; they could not give form to the true vision of beauty which a literary man might have. A national language, and the bringing about of commonwealth of literatures fell within the province of distribution, whereas creative art was a matter of production and could only be done through the medium of the mother-tongue. Facility of distribution might stimulate production; and the exigencies of distribution might determine the nature of production; but the true secret of production was the richness, and fertility of the soil, of the mother-tongue. Whoever served his own language would truly serve the commonwealth of literature; whoever helped to build up a national language and literature, would ensure the growth of his mother-tongue. India was a nation, it throbbed with the impulse of becoming harmonious; its literary men had been dreaming of one language, one script and one literature as they never did before. This situation raised before every literary man in the country a vista of unending development and growth.

A little memorandum written by me in English headed "Towards a Commonwealth of Provincial Literature in India" was circulated among literary men in the country.

It began—

> Of late, literary consciousness has grown in every province in India which possesses a distinctive language. This consciousness has led to the birth of numerous literary associations in each province with a federal body at the top known as the *Sahitya Parishad* of that language. But generally these associations pursue the path of provincial isolation.
>
> * * * *
>
> But Nationalism dominates the present and will continue to dominate the future. All provincial effort will continue to find increased self-fulfilment in a greater national unity; and a commonwealth of literatures, to which each Indian province will have contributed its best and noblest will be a necessary attribute of India, if she is to attain the full stature of nationhood. But such a commonwealth can only be rendered possible through the medium of Hindi and implies a co-ordinated effort on the part of literary men from all provinces. When this result is achieved, we would have laid the foundation of a Federation of Provincial *Sahitya Parishads*—in fact, an All-India *Sahitya Parishad.* I have cherished this idea since 1925 when I came to be actively associated with the Gujarati *Sahitya Parishad.*

The proposal met with a good response, and a monthly magazine, *Hans*, was started under the joint editorship of the late Mr. Premchand, the great Hindi novelist, and myself. Blessed by Gandhiji and associated with the name

of a Hindi and a Gujarati novelist, it was a success from the start.

It filled a great void. Many authors in several parts of India came together in its pages for the first time. But after a brilliant career of about a year, it had to be stopped as the Collector of Benares demanded security from us. Even this literary magazine was found too dangerous. Gandhiji would not brook the idea of depositing security.

Some time later, Kakasaheb Kalekar and myself busied ourselves with starting the *Bharatiya Sahitya Parishad* as envisaged in my memorandum. But the country was not ripe for such a Federal Literary Association.

CHAPTER XXXIV

To the Great Experiment

ABOUT the middle of 1936, Congressmen began to prepare for the provincial elections under the new Government of India Act, which were going to be held in the beginning of 1937. But the question again faced the Congressmen : after provincial elections, what next ? To accept or not to accept office ? The anti-parliamentary complex of the bulk of Congressmen was again a persistent obstacle to realizing that training through parliamentary or administrative work was as important in our struggle for freedom as propaganda or constructive work outside. The Congress had sworn "to combat the Act and the policy underlying it." Here we were, said the anti-parliamentarians, not only going into the Provincial Assemblies and Councils, but going to accept the Act by forming Ministries ! In moments of action, the Congress had always see-sawed between high idealism and stern realism. And their co-ordination had been possible only by the marvellous powers which Gandhiji possessed of evolving formulas.

The Government of India Act gave considerable powers to the Ministries within the restricted provincial sphere. The Congress could have, it was then expected, at least five or six Ministries working under its guidance. This fact would give to these Ministries certain strength enabling them to enlarge the scope of freedom in the country. But no one dared to place this point of view.

Even to argue in favour of Office Acceptance in a private discussion was to supply a proof positive of one's personal desire for the loaves and fishes of office. Mr. S. Satyamurti, M.L.A. (Central), Deputy Leader of the Congress Party in the Indian Legislative Assembly, however, with rare courage, was the only outspoken protagonist of Office Acceptance in the country and attracted unmerited obloquy.

It was my opinion that it would be an irretrievable blunder if office was not accepted. I placed my views in a series of articles on the subject, which were published in several dailies all over India. Even from the point of the goal of the Congress, the acceptance of office was a necessity. In the last of my articles, I pleaded :

> Barring the miracles which world war and world revolution are supposed to accomplish, India cannot secure Independence without being an organized nation with an irresistible collective will. Therefore, when we say that the goal of the Congress to-day is *Purna Swaraj*, we only mean that the goal is to generate national power which will secure such *swaraj* in the future. The object of the Congress is to gain the strength with which to win *Purna Swaraj*.
>
> The history of the Congress during the last thirty years shows how this strength has grown out of the rhythmic movements of our national life. A lull has followed the storm and in its turn has been followed by a still more powerful storm. Every succeeding upheaval has been characterized by an increasingly wider basis and sterner resistance. This was achieved by the Congress, not by shouting impossible slogans or making impatient gestures, but by acquiring a wider control over the life of the people during every period of lull.

Congressmen under the direction of leading members of the Congress hierarchy organized themselves into voluntary associations for furthering nation-building in its different aspects. Many forms of social organization in the country like associations, clubs, local boards, educational and civic bodies, and the legislatures were brought under leaders animated by the Congress policy. If *khadi* had not created an army of selfless workers; if the workers had not spread a spirit of quiet discipline; if their *ashrams* had not taught organized resistance to evil; if the mercantile associations had not been led to prefer politics to profits ; if municipalities had not given Congressmen a hold over civic life in many cities, the nation could not have offered the resistance which it did during three years of Ordinance Rule. The strength thus put forward, no doubt, was inadequate, for the process was spontaneous rather than deliberately planned. At each place, the discipline varied with the quality of the leader ; the Working Committee laid down a specific programme of action and numerous Congress Committees carried it out, according to the measure of their ability.

The real objective of the Congress, therefore, is to prepare the country for a new life, a life in which mass movements, characterized by strenuous resistance to all things anti-national, alternate with intensive activity for gaining greater control over all forms of social organizations, governmental and non-governmental. During the present lull, therefore, the Congress has to seek every opportunity to bring all publicly organized activities under the control of well-drilled Congressmen, under the direction of a single will. Gandhiji, with intuition more than policy, appears to have taken a step

forward in the right direction. He has evidently decided that all national activities including the legislative activity, should be controlled directly according to a predetermined plan and programme. Only by introducing disciplined action in this way into the different spheres of national life, can the spirit of resistance be kept up and the goal of the Congress achieved.

The Working Committee has therefore to take steps to exercise direct control over as many organizations or activities in the country as possible. It is, then, difficult to understand how by accepting Office and assuming control of the Legislatures, the most powerful governmental association in the province, the Congress would be deflected from its course or fall from grace. Even if there is some chance of utilizing the power and influence of the Constitution in the interests of the Congress, or of offering resistance to the Special Powers of the Governor, why should it be thrown away? The British Government has created the constitutional safeguards as a check against the power of the Congress; why give up an attempt to break through them and thus play into the hands of the enemy? A Congress group will shoulder responsibility for such an attempt only under the orders of the Working Committee. If the purpose for which it has gone into office is not likely to be secured, it will be recalled forthwith; if it assists in gathering strength for the Congress, the next upheaval will be so powerful that the nation will have advanced much nearer *Swaraj*. And to call this co-operation, or job-hunting or weakness, is in itself defeatism, and bespeaks lack of self-confidence, which circumstances do not warrant.

Many of the hopes expressed were realized during the regime of the Congress Ministries.

By my articles, in support of Office Acceptance, I also attracted a share of the odium. Some Congress leaders were highly displeased. Gandhiji, however, had an open mind. Even the Congress in its plenary session of 1936, had deferred decision on the point, till after the elections were over.

After the Congress accepted Office, it was acknowledged that on all hands the Congress had grown immensely in strength, by its decision to accept Office.

The provincial elections went better than expected, mainly on account of the skill with which Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel used his organizing powers and the enthusiasm which Pandit Jawaharlal's stirring campaign inspired throughout the country. In Madras, where the Congress had to struggle against a communal party entrenched in power for a long time, Mr. C. Rajagopalachariar worked miracles and wiped it out. I was returned to the Bombay Legislative Assembly by my old constituency, the Graduates of the University of Bombay.

After the elections, the question of Office Acceptance became a live problem. The Congress High Command, as it came to be called later, was sharply divided. Gandhiji, as is usual with him at such moments, became inscrutable. Then came one of those flashes of the genius which pierce the fog and penetrate into the very heart of things. Gandhiji appealed for a gentlemanly understanding between the Governors and their Congress Ministers, that the former would not exercise their special power of

influence as long as the Ministers acted within the Constitution.

The vision of the Seer was right. But for that assurance, the Ministries would have had no real power. When that assurance was forthcoming, the provisions in the Government of India Act affecting the provinces were altered beyond recognition. Gandhiji, then, destroyed what the framers of the Act had thought were the basic provisions, surely, yet non-violently.

The Congress legislators from all over the country met in a Convention at Delhi in March 1937 to swear a solemn pledge of loyalty to the Congress. The Congress had left the period of stagnation behind and once again was on the high road to its objective. It was the master in six, if not seven, provinces, and it had the fate of the Government of India Act in its hands. At this stage also, the chronic tendency among a class of Congressmen to call upon Gandhiji to lead a forward movement, whatever it may mean, broke out. According to them, they were to decide the time of action and Gandhiji was to supply the inspiration, the technique and the success. But Gandhiji was made of sterner stuff. He knew his countrymen well and he had seen in acceptance of Office, the next step in India's march to freedom.

The question of leadership of the Congress Party in the Bombay Provincial Legislature became immediately one of the live issues. Sjt. K. F. Nariman and myself were generally considered by the public to be in the run. For various reasons, I had been out of it for a long time and had been supporting the candidature of Mr. B. G. Kher. He was the one man who carried everybody's confidence. On March 12, 1937, Mr. Kher was unanimously elected

the leader, a choice which was ultimately justified by the work which the Bombay Congress Ministry did under his Premiership. But here begins the domain of contemporary politics, which I shall leave out.

CHAPTER XXXV

Yoga "in Action"

SINCE 1932 I have tried, though a little irreverently, to examine and probe into the phenomenon which I had come to cherish under the name "Gandhiji," not merely by what he had said and done, but by what I felt he was. For some years now, I have placed myself in his hands—of course in a sense limited by shortcomings and philosophy of life—trying to be worthy of the trust he sometimes reposes in me, yielding to him an allegiance to which my temper and training are alien. I make no pretence of portraying Gandhiji objectively—no one can, however capable he may be at analysing objective conditions.

India is familiar with Gandhiji's face and figure, as perhaps with those of no other man, dead or living. Contemporaries have tried to catch them in picturesque phrases.

Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, the great poetess, calls him "a mickey mouse of a man."

Mr. Winston Churchill once called him contemptuously a "naked *fakir*" !

Somebody said that he looked a satyr.

The bald head, the hooked nose, the toothless mouth, the large, straight-set ears—not to forget the inevitable goat with which, by the way, I have never seen him in company—have attracted the pen of the caricaturist and the art of the vaudeville director.

My experience has been quite different. When I see him, I only see the smile lighting up with joy the little world around him and the eyes enveloping me with affectionate understanding.

I hear a voice, which thrills me.

Sometimes, I keep company with the springy feet, which remind me of undying youth.

On occasions I hear him laying down the law with the serene immutability of one "speaking with authority." And every time I attend his prayers, I see in the fragile body seated before me, draped in white, with eyes closed and head bowed in humble submission to God, only a self-forged instrument of something above and beyond me, which communicates through it, love, inspiration and wisdom which passeth understanding.

Gandhiji's day is a self-contained epitome of a lifetime. Rest and relaxation, well adjusted hours for exercise, food, and sleep, prayers and solitude, all find place in the day's programme of work which embraces almost every sphere of life. Up at the *brahmamuhurta*—4 a.m.—the hour held sacred by the *Rishis* for rising—Gandhiji has his morning prayers. Then he has a walk, often with a companion, an anxious politician, a recalcitrant follower, or a sorrowing wife seeking solace in a domestic tangle.

Of late, on account of failing health, Gandhiji goes for a walk after sunrise, when, often, a little crowd follows him at a reverential distance. On his return from the walk, the daily routine starts. Interviews are granted, while an attendant gives him massage. Letters are read, including those from American admirers and British correspondents, from eager applicants for monetary help and from

poisonous detractors. The blank part of every paper is saved with care to be used for future communications.

Then there are jokes, joyous, harmless and witty, to enliven the dull moments; little children to be played and laughed with; domestic problems and personal difficulties of disciples to be solved; sometimes the ways of snakes —a bottle full of them—have to be studied and little discoveries like *gul* from the toddy tree to be made and broadcast ; and, perhaps most irritating of all, even to him, the rivalries of irrepressible followers to be adjusted.

In this welter of activities, several all-India organizations, doing constructive work, have to be guided. The work of leading Congressmen all over India has to be controlled, the problems of communal harmony and untouchability to be straightened, and so vast an organization as the Congress to be supervised. British statesmen have to be dealt with at long range or through several intermediaries. The principle of non-violence has to be interpreted and applied to the fluctuating experiences of daily life. The philosophy and the technique of *satyagraha* are to be presented for the emancipation of the world. At the same time, the poise and detachment of a *yogi* has to be maintained by self-control, prayer and constant communion with God. And these feats have to be performed in failing energies and under erratic blood pressure from a little village, a few miles away from railway and telegraph.

In all these multifarious activities, the one thing that forcefully strikes even a casual observer is that Gandhiji is the master. "My Experiments with Truth," Gandhiji's autobiography, has recorded his ceaseless struggle for mastery over human weakness with which he was more

than normally endowed. He has willed his body to perform its appointed task. He has created his own surroundings, and shaped the lives of those around him. He has forged the formidable organizations which struggle to liberate India.

The first trait in Gandhiji, which, even at first sight, distinguishes him from all men, is the perfection of each little act of his. His papers are arranged in an unimpeachable order. His short loin-cloth is worn with a fastidious care which would rouse the envy of a smartly dressed young man. His courtesy is incomparable. His chivalrous attention to women—maybe the lowliest—would leave the accomplished far behind. The shortest of his letters has a personal touch which binds the addressee to him. His political correspondence has the force and dignity which trained diplomats may covet. His tone, manner and language on all occasions is faultlessly appropriate. The appropriateness, however, is not mechanical. It has the grace of spontaneity. It has a soulful reality which one who has devoted sympathetic attention to the occasion alone can give. The words of the *Gita*, " *Yoga* is perfection in action" have come true in him.

CHAPTER XXXVI

What is Truth?

ANOTHER outstanding trait of Gandhiji is the capacity to separate the essentials from the non-essentials. However tangled the web, Gandhiji can be relied upon to unweave it, by a faculty which his incessant search of Truth has given him. That is why persons who have mental reservations find it difficult to get along with him.

"What is Truth ?" asked Pilate; and so did I, with my notions of historical relativity, when I saw Gandhiji laying emphasis on it. At one time, I thought a violent revolution the only true solution of India's evils. Gandhiji thought it untrue, and so do I, now. There cannot be two truths. And yet Sage Vyasa and Sage Patanjali and, in their footsteps, Gandhiji insist that Truth is a Law, to be observed in all climes and at all times. For many years, I sought the solution of this difficulty, till a closer view of Gandhiji showed me the way.

Truth, for the ordinary mortal cannot be objective ; his subjective weaknesses always blur his vision. Hegel's great contribution to human thought was the discovery of historical relativism. No human mind, he found, could climb out of its environment and view it objectively from an absolute standpoint. But in India, from time immemorial, the Masters have laid down that by ceaseless effort and assiduous detachment from worldly things, the mind can become free, fearless and untainted by wrath; it can then transcend direct and inferential knowledge,

fancy and even memory, and with vision undimmed can see the Truth as it is, which is entirely different from what seems to us and what we call Truth.

Gandhiji's effort throughout his life has been to undergo the training necessary to be able to see this Truth by struggling to practise such Truth as he can see through the varying conditions of life. And this ceaseless struggle has crowned Gandhiji's creative efforts with success. He has worked a series of miracles in less than twenty-five years. The Congress has become a powerful organization of a great nation. Antediluvian *khadi* has become a modern achievement. Untouchability has been exploded. Non-violence has come to be a live force in politics. Battles have been fought with a mighty Empire and won with the aid of this weapon of Non-violence. Indians have acquired a heroic tradition. Three-fourths of India has come to be governed by a steel frame of which Gandhiji is the final director. This is the result of his "Experiments with Truth."

Gandhiji did not lay down one policy for leaders and another policy for the masses. He was the first to practise what he preached. If the sense of possession was sin, it was a sin for his wife, Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi, to keep even a few rupees with her, however innocently. If Rajkot was a failure, it was a failure to be proclaimed and repented for, publicly. No great man, known to history, has publicly confessed to so many weaknesses and blunders. Not that the others were not guilty of such lapses, but their sense of Truth did not demand an open acknowledgment. Truth that Gandhiji is seeking is not correctness of facts or logical accuracy. His life stands for the principle that thought, word and deed welded in harmony alone lead to enduring creative effort. It is the Law of Moral

Causation as enunciated by Sage Patanjali: "If an individual practises Truth, his actions bear immediate fruition."

Accomplishment is only the visible counterpart of the individual experience of harmony of thought, speech and action.

CHAPTER XXXVII

Law of Moral Causation

GANDHIJI'S life has been a living embodiment of the inexorability of this Law of Moral Causation. The *Mahavratas*, the broad heads under which the Law is generally treated, are Truth, Non-violence, Non-stealing, Non-spending and Non-possession. They are universal in their application. They are to be pursued unaffected by the personnel or the time, or the place or the utility. They are not categorical imperatives. But, they are a part of a chain of cause and effect, which experience has shown to be unalterable. If an individual becomes non-violent in thought, word and deed, he would attract love, which implies lasting influence over man.

Many men have tamed the fierce beasts by non-violence. The Early Christian martyrs practised it and the love of Europe gravitated to them. All his life, Gandhiji has defied and fought many men and interests, but his antagonists bear him no malice. For, "when a man has realized Non-violence," says Sage Patanjali, "people come to him forgetting their hostility."

In a recent instance, a devoted and capable follower, a married man, had fallen in love with an unmarried pupil, by whom he was going to have a child. It was a great moral issue. Gandhiji, to whom the man confessed, shed tears. "But it was the tie of love. I could not take a sword and cut it into two. I had to try an experiment in non-violence," he said. Gandhiji made arrangements to protect the girl in her misfortune. The man who had

sinned was asked to give up all public and private life and was sentenced to stay with him for an unlimited period to outlive infamy by mute service. And when I heard this incident from his own lips, the faint echoes of another conversation came to my mind across the centuries :

> "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. . . .
>
> Woman, where are those, thine accusers ? Hath no man condemned thee ?"
>
> She said, "No man, Lord."
>
> And Jesus said unto her, "Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more."

And so with Non-stealing.

Experience has proved that when a man becomes the embodiment of Non-stealing, he attracts wealth. When a man realizes Non-spending on himself, strength follows. Throughout life, Gandhiji has tried to stop waste by celibacy and silence, by planned economy of his time and energy, and in spite of failing health, he enjoys the vigour of mind and body.

When a man has given up all possessions, he realizes the how and wherefore of existence, what his place in life is and what his destined goal is. It is Non-possession which gives Gandhiji that clarity of vision which baffles all logic and calculation.

Non-violence, Truth, Non-stealing, Non-spending and Non-possession are, respectively, the inseparable antecedents of power and accomplishment, wealth and vigour, and a true view of life's fulfilment. No claim is made that it is a theory or a message, divinely inspired. There is no

historical relativism about it. It is like the law of gravitation. As the apple falls off the tree, it is drawn to the earth. It is the law of Cause and Effect established by boundless experience.

Viewing Gandhiji against the background of this modern world, we come across a man who, amidst shifting conventions and violent conflicts between nations and races, has transcended relativity and surrendered himself unreservedly to the inevitable certainty of the Law. The *Mahavratas* are, in and through him, realized as the only unchanging realities. This explains the love and faith of Gandhiji's attraction of the love and faith of millions of his fellow-beings from all parts of the world. Through him, the earnest seekers after Truth hear the voice, not merely of Saint Narsinha, Saint Tulsidas and Saint Augustine, but of Christ, of Buddha, of Confucius and of Sage Vyasa, the first and the greatest of those, who *saw* and taught this law.

An ordinary mortal, with the powers and accomplishments which we associate with the name of Gandhiji, would have been the victim of his own perfection. But not so, this successor to the line of the Immortal Teachers. For he is humble. He has surrendered himself to God. This "surrender" is difficult to understand, more so to practise, except to those who have, by personal experience, worked their way to it. The human Will is weak, till it is built on the solid foundation of a surrender to Something undefined but unfailing. It is not as easy as it looks, this *Isvarapranidhana*, the surrender to God ; nor is it as ridiculous, as we, in our modern arrogant intellectualism, think.

If Gandhiji had not his God to fall back on, he would be weaker than most men through whom he works. His

mind is infused with Him ; his faith is based on what he feels to be His will. Friend of all, full of compassion, rid of "I" and "Mine," poised alike in pain and pleasure, he lives and moves, and has his being only as His instrument. To us, men of no such experience, it is difficult to believe what to him is the Reality, in which he subsists and through which his being is nourished and impregnated with eternal freshness. And that makes him the Master.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

Non-violence, a Collective Activity

BEFORE Gandhiji came on the scene, Non-violence was never considered anything but a personal attribute to be dreamt of by moralists and achieved by *yogis*. It was left to Gandhiji to say in terms that the Law of Moral Causation operates as much through masses of men as through the individual ; that groups of men can, by eschewing violence and camouflage, attain unity of thought, word and deed and become capable of corporate purposive conduct of a high order. They can cultivate non-violence not only in conduct, but forswear anger and malice, while conducting a determined conflict. In the name of Non-violence they would not, like the Collective Pacifists of Europe, become incapable of resisting coercion or violence. But through this method, they can attain the desired results and attract the love and the respect of nations.

That Truth and Non-violence can be made applicable to collective activities as against camouflage and force is so revolutionary a doctrine that the elements which go to create and strengthen such activities, whether they are tribal, religious or political, must be considered. In all ages they have consisted of the following—

(1) Leaders who create the group idea ; who by their deeds focus the minds and wills of men on themselves ; who lay down principles, inspire enthusiasm, and form tradition.

(2) A well-knit group of workers which loyally carries out the leader's message, inculcates and enforces discipline by its actions, and in mass action forms a shock brigade or a steel frame as necessity arises.

(3) Propaganda, which spreads the doctrine, formulates motives, guides the popular mind, creates public opinion, converts ideas into active sentiments and weaves the individual Wills in a network of Common Will.

(4) Modes of mass action directed to a common purpose and dominated by the group idea, which, when repeated often, forms group habits.

(5) Conflicts which keep the group idea before men evoke determined Collective Action and create group traditions.

These factors are seen at work from the beginning of time in armed conflicts of social groups. Their earliest exponent was the tribal chief, who organized his kinsmen to rob his neighbours and reduce them to slavery. But the achievements of the first priest, who struggled to evolve a happier order, are not so clearly appreciated. He made use of the same factors. He became a leader; he had his hierarchy and his propaganda; he had his non-violent conflict with his tribal chief; and he achieved the first triumphs of the Law, when he taught the victorious vandal self-restraint and toleration by adhering to Truth and Non-violence. Thus, the parallel organizations, one based on violence, the other on non-violence, had their dim beginnings with the earliest dawn of human society.

In ancient India, even long before the plundering hordes of the semi-mythic *Sahasrarjuna* overran

Aryavarta (India), the *Rishis* had come to perceive the inevitability of the Law and had begun to organize society on the permanent basis which it provided. India was a favourable soil for this experiment. From the first, the supremacy of the cultured classes in society was recognized and accepted. Through centuries, an unbroken succession of *Rishis*, Saints, *Sadhus*, *Sanyasis*, *Bikshus* and Brahmans had not only dedicated themselves to the study and propounding of the Law, but become its conscious instruments. Their propaganda, through scripture and tradition, in maxim and adage, was carried on, not only in India but in China, Japan, and several other countries. Modes of mass action based on the Law were prescribed by them and adopted by millions, who were welded into a Cultural Unity strong enough to resist the shifting political organizations imposed by successive conquerors. This Social atmosphere became so permeated by the Law that it required no fiats of a Temporal Power to enact it.

We, with our modern obsessions look upon the caste system as a watertight arrangement, which sanctions enduring inequality. *Varnasrama* was entirely different. It gave to each one a secure place in the class of his birth, but demanded for every one the right to assume the place his capacity and culture deserved. The four castes were interdependent components of one harmonious whole. Society was conceived as an association of the four fluid culture groups for the maintenance of Social Order as inspired and controlled by the *Dharma* (Law).

Society was not a restriction of natural rights ; and self-interest not the sole and sufficient urge for Social Action. This marvellous organization was created and maintained by non-violent resistance, in the technique of

which, ostracism, individual and corporate non-co-operation, self-inflicted suffering and determined and cheerful refusal to surrender, even at the cost of one's life, played their part. The organization became elastic in a favourable atmosphere, as under the Guptas, it became rigid in self-protection, as when Islam threatened Hinduism. With changing time, it may facilitate the birth of a nation, as we witness to-day. It could always resist violence non-violently and be strong and virile.

It is, however, difficult to look at Hindu culture from this perspective, partly because, hypnotized by modern European thought, we have lost the faculty of judging rightly, and partly because its life extends over centuries, its field of operation is spread over Asia, and it counts a following of millions of dead and living.

CHAPTER XXXIX

Organized Non-violence in Europe

ROME was perhaps the most powerful organization of the ancient world. It was built first on the Might of a city, and then of a country. Its rule was maintained throughout its dominions by force of arms. It produced the finest example of corporate activities which organized coercion furnished in the ancient world.

Against it, however, were pitted the collective activities of the Early Christians who were inspired both by Truth and Non-violence. Their saints, the leaders, even in that age of slow travel, acquired greater influence and inspired greater devotion than ever a Napoleon or a Lenin did. They proved that the readiness to die for Truth was the only essential quality in leadership, which moved men to action ; that only self-invited suffering in its pursuit built up genuine traditions. Intense devotion to the leader's word made their party, the community of Early Christians which had no geographical or racial limits, a more compact organization than any in modern times. With the immortal slogan, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," for their watchword, they adhered to Truth, while in chains, under whips, in the lions' den, never faltering, never forswearing ; suffering and yet never inflicting suffering. They had no inquisition or OGPU to terrorize them into submission, no earthly rewards to lure them. They were knit together by their own Free Will, by a Faith in their Master.

They were great propagandists. They passed their gospel of Love, Charity and Hope from mouth to mouth, till it reached the ends of Europe. Glorious suffering made the most effective propaganda ; the starving monk, steadfast in faith, became the most powerful propagandist ; and the Hope which his message brought was the most stirring and heartening news. The modes of mass action were the same everywhere, the Baptism, the Sabbath, the Congregation of the Faithful. And conflict, for every Christian, was a daily task with the heart within, with Jews and Romans without. Even the prison became an arena of non-violent resistance as Tertullianus, the greatest Church writer of the West, after St. Augustine, testified.

Said Tertullianus—

> For, if we reflect that the world is more really the prison, we shall see that you have gone out of a prison rather than into one. . . . It is full of darkness, but ye yourselves are light; it has bonds, but God has made you free. Unpleasant exaltations are there, but ye are an order of sweetness. . . .The prison does the same service for the Christians, which the desert did for the Prophet. Our Lord Himself spent much of His time in seclusion, that He might have greater liberty to pray, that He might be quit of the world. It was in a mountain solitude, too, He showed His glory to His disciples. Let us drop the name of prison ; let us call it a place of retirement. Though the body is shut in, though the flesh is confined, all things are open to the spirit. In spirit, then, roam abroad ; in spirit walk about, not setting before you shady paths or long colonnades but the way which leads to God. As often as in spirit, your footsteps are there, so often you will not be in the heavens. The mind

compasses the whole man about, and whither it wills, it carries him. But where thy heart shall be, there shall be thy treasure. Be there our heart, then, where we would have our treasure. . . .We, with the Crown eternal in our eye, look upon the prison as our training ground, that to the goal of final judgment, we may be brought forth well disciplined by many a trial; since virtue is built up by hardships as by voluptuous indulgence it is overthrown.

Immortal words, which Gandhiji preached again sixteen hundred years later.

The results achieved by the Early Christians were more powerful and enduring than the activities of modern nation-builders. They pursued Truth, and successful action followed. They lived up to Non-violence and men flocked to their fold. They went through suffering and death and a new social fabric came to be woven. The proudest Empire in the world was its greatest convert.

CHAPTER XL

From Non-violence to Violence

The Nation-State

WHEN the Roman Empire of the West was broken up, political power, in spite of the claims of the Holy Roman Empire to be heir to its temporal dignity, came to be distributed between the kings and feudal chiefs of Europe. But the Church, the organization which was built by the non-violent collective activities of the Early Christians, flourished and ruled in the name of Christ, who was the exponent, and for Europe, the Saviour, of the Moral Law. The Vatican had a highly organized party with churchmen in every village, who gave to Western Europe a common culture, by its control of art, education, literature, philosophy and science. The Law which it upheld was not imposed by force, not by the will of a Sovereign, but, as in India, was the product of the Social Atmosphere which grew in a framework of Moral Order. Within it, the King, the Baron, and the Serf moved and lived.

Christian Europe was thus a cultural organization based on the Moral Order as propounded by Christ and interpreted by the Vatican. But, being controlled by a close oligarchy at the top, its control passed from those, who held themselves to be the instruments of the Law, to those who exploited their position in the interests of coercive power. It was denied the transfusion of fresh inspiration, as in India, from men who, generation after generation,

rediscovered the Law and reinvested Life with its values. Churchmen lost the faculty to WILL the Church into fresh existence, day after day, by prayer and penance, by love and self-surrender, by those daily acts which stimulate creative imagination, thereby strengthening the power of resistance.

The Church allied itself with warring kings and blessed force and fraud. In consequence, the organization of the Church lost its vitality. The art of organizing masses on a non-violent basis, was forgotten in Europe. Kings and their advisers tried to wrest the secret of collective activities of men only from Organized Violence. The decadent Church was found to hinder rather than to help the formation of effective human life. "And certainly," said Machiavelli, the greatest exponent of the new outlook,

> a country can never be united and happy, except when it obeys wholly one Government, whether a republic or a monarchy, as is the case in France and in Spain, and the sole cause why Italy is not in the same condition, and is not governed by either one republic or one sovereign, is the Church. . . .

Europe had drifted far away from Jesus, and Machiavelli formulated the new creed of Violence in defiance of the Law of Moral Causation. The principal instrument of organization, according to him, was the Sovereign. Man was amoral and anti-social. Love of power was his one dominant motive. Other men were obstacles to or instruments of his self-aggrandisement. Renaissance Society thus erected altars to the Ruler who could wield force. The Moral Law no longer held man in restraint. It became only a useful instrument for keeping men

subservient. Thus, in camouflage and violence was the foundation-stone of the modern Nation-State laid.

The idea of a Nation-State was the result of a compromise between despotism and the wealthy middle classes, whom the despots called in, to assist in liquidating feudalism and the Papacy. The Divine Right of Kings and the duty of Passive Obedience were its earliest corollaries. "Kings", said James I, "are the breathing images of God." The Church, as in England under the Tudors, became an appendix of the State, and so did the economic life of the country. The Tudors, as irresponsible Dictators, organized the Nation-State of England. Even the Roundheads, who claimed to fight for the Gospel, could only organize men by violence.

The conception of the Nation-State, to which later a philosophic background was given by Hobbes, was an organization based entirely on the use of violence. According to Hobbes, the Moral Order was a fiction; the inexorability of the Law—a myth. A man in the state of nature was free and anti-social. But being afraid of the freedom of his neighbours to destroy him, he entered into a contract with them to surrender his right to freedom and granted Omnipotence to the Sovereign. The Sovereign was therefore above the Law and retained his supremacy by unrestricted violence. Human beings, according to this exponent of the doctrine, can only be organized by creating this Omnipotent Leviathan.

Under the shadow of Force, for which the Leviathan stood, the British nation came into existence. England had no racial minorities. Its religious feuds had abated fury after the Restoration. Its insular position made foreign interference well-nigh impossible. Its small, compact

territory made communication of ideas and sentiments easy. And the search for wealth in all parts of the globe provided the impulse, under the determining influence of which Englishmen acquired national consciousness. But the Collective Will of the English people had been expressed through undisturbed social activities for a long period under the guidance of the Nation-State before the Nation came into existence.

CHAPTER XLI

Making of Nations

A NATION is not organized by unity created by geography, language or religion. It cannot be merely created by objective conditions. It can only be done by people consciously, *willing* themselves into a nation.

Says Fouille, in his *La Science Sociale Contemporaine:*

> Nation is an organism, which realizes itself in conceiving and in willing its own existence. Any collection of men becomes a society in the only true sense of the word, when all the men conceive more or less clearly the type of the organic whole, which they can form by uniting themselves and when they effectively unite themselves under the determining influence of this conception. Society is then an organism which exists because it has been *thought and willed*. It is an organism born of an idea.

A nation is the product of a million wills combined in the act of living up to the idea of a great UNITY. The difference in the concepts between a country and a nation is therefore fundamental. No one can be born a nationalist ; every one has to become one, by *thinking, planning and willing* himself into a nation. Common traditions, sufferings endured and victories won in common, names of great personalities that seem to embody in themselves the character and ideals of the nation; and memories of group conflicts which have yielded proud triumphs, these have to come into existence before the nation-idea can be *willed* into existence.

It was otherwise in America and France. The Americans of the Northern and Southern States were not homogeneous in race, language and religion ; but they came together to resist Britain by war and under the influence of English and French political thinkers, to give themselves a constitution. Their isolation helped them in their object. But it was the armed resistance to foreign rule and violent coercion of the centrifugal tendencies of unwilling minorities, which made of the United States of America a Nation-State.

Then came Rousseau who, with tremendous religious fervour, preached of a new God—Human Nature—and a new religious community, Humanity, whose general Will was the Sovereign. His great contribution was to place the dignity of Human Personality on a sacred pedestal, which no Nation-State founded on Democracy dare profane.

After the Revolution of 1789, Frenchmen were faced with the difference between the various schools of revolutionary doctrinaires and the danger of foreign intervention. And in 1791, inspired by intense patriotism, they offered determined resistance to Europe which had threatened their country's Independence. By that resistance, they willed the French Nation into existence. Napoleon became the embodiment of the people's *will.* Amidst the roar of his cannons, the Nation-State of France was founded.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, Nationalism, under Mazzini, came to be invested with an intense idealism. The armed resistance offered by Garibaldi and the diplomatic skill with which Cavour exploited the ambitions of the Great European powers gave a Nation-State to Italy. Thereafter, Nationalism became a religion, and the right to have a Nation-State for each country was

accepted as one of the fundamental articles of modern political faith. In fact, however, the creation of a Nation-State depended upon the volume of effective violence it could marshall, and the self-interest of powerful Nation-States which it could press into its service.

Germany had a cultural, not a national unity, till in 1870, Bismarck forced political unity upon it. Nationhood was not willed into existence by the people, but superimposed by the military strength of Prussia and maintained by the skill of a genius. It was, however, the Treaty of Versailles, which, by destroying the Empire of Austria, gave to the Germans an opportunity to *will* themselves into a Nation-State. Adolf Hitler is the symbol of German Nationalism which, so far, has flourished on organized violence.

CHAPTER XLII

Collective Action Under the Dictators

THE technique of utilizing Force for organizing mass movements has been elevated into a fine art in modern times by Mussolini and Hitler and treated almost as a science by Lenin and, after him, by Stalin.

The attention of the group is focussed on the Leader who controls the party and propaganda. At all costs, the Duce and Fuhrer are to be admired, worshipped and obeyed. Lenin has already acquired the halo which surrounded Jesus Christ, and Stalin is the All-high. This position is maintained not by voluntary allegiance but by intense propaganda and irresistible force. The party is a soulless machine run by a few oligarchs, without any moral background. Failure to join it, brings down the wrath of the party upon the unfortunate victim ; to leave it is to be guilty of high treason. Discipline is secured by the promise of power and, more often, by espionage, coercion and bloodshed.

Propaganda is of the basest kind. Its first casualty is truth. The cheap literature about the blessings which Russians enjoy under the Soviet rule which flood our markets is an instance in point. There is one law for the leaders, another rule for the followers. To the leaders, the people are a crowd to be cajoled, bribed or terrorized into certain modes of conduct by artful propaganda or ceaseless coercion. Spontaneity is destroyed to produce a semblance of Nationhood. Hatred of other nations is infused as an easy substitute for National Will. The

Doctrine of Moral Causation is reversed. The malice underlying the Treaty of Versailles gave birth to German National Socialism. The Hymn of Hate which Hitler preaches will lead neither to peace on earth nor goodwill unto men.

These methods have been worked to perfection in Russia. The Russian people are left no initiative. They are drilled and coerced by the Soviets ; the Soviets are coerced in their turn by the Party. The Party is controlled by its leaders, watched by the OGPU and purged when necessary by the Chief. The all-seeing OGPU, in its activities fastens its tentacles on the whole life of the people. Another Secret Service watches over the dreaded OGPU. And Stalin sits in the Kremlin, a Tsar more powerful than the Romanoffs, ruthlessly organizing a strong Nation-State without a National Soul or a Collective Will : a dread jail or a nation-wide prison forcing every one to "planned economy."

The Collective Will of men is thus replaced by the iron hand of the Despot. And every ambitious nation, lest it may fail in this race, follows Russia as fast as it can. But, in the meantime, the Law works. Where untruth has been sown, discontent is being reaped. Where violence is sown hatred and ill-will are being harvested. And they have been destroying the spontaneous growth of men and nations.

CHAPTER XLIII

Gandhiji's Mission

THE West and, in its wake, the world have forgotten, if not forsworn, the Law of Moral Causation, of which Gandhiji is the most authoritative living exponent. Violence has developed a technique of universal applicability. There is a general recoil from freedom. Countries, whether democratic or otherwise, which have Nation-States are armed camps. Need for armaments overweighs life. Personality is being stifled. Harmonious and spontaneous working of men's *will* is replaced by systematic coercion. People are chained slaves, building national pyramids for ambitious Pharaohs.

Under these conditions, Gandhiji has to work, and being an Indian, of necessity, to work through India. Before he came to India, the British rulers had given the country external security, but crippled the unifying power of its Culture. Intellectual Indians, inspired by Bentham and Mill, thought in terms of an out-of-date British Liberalism, which suited no country except Victorian England. Ardent young patriots dreamt of a Nation-State for their unarmed country, in some distant future by a revolution of which no one had an idea. The vast country with its millions lay inert and timid, torn by creeds, languages, by provincial pride and the self-interest of social groups. Even the unifying ideal of *Varnasrama* had been replaced by an ill-digested theory of equality of men. In the light of its theory, the Hindu community appeared nothing better than an ill-assorted mosaic of differing patterns. Under the

influence of modern education, the linguistic provinces which had unity of language, literature and social tradition, revived the rivalries which had destroyed their petty rulers in mediæval times. And Britain watchfully frustrated the efforts of a Nationalism which the unity its rule had super-imposed upon the country, had brought into existence.

Gandhiji accepted two of the fundamentals of Democratic Nationalism of Western Europe; the freedom of the individual which the Democratic tradition had inherited from the Greeks through Christianity and the concept of the Nation as a secular organization, indispensable to modern conditions. His emphasis on Truth as a harmony between thought, word and deed of each individual reinvested the dignity of Man with religious sanctity, and in the Nation alone he saw the essential human organization which would save Humanity.

But, with his sure eye, Gandhiji while accepting Democracy and Nationalism, rejected the underlying political belief that suffrage was a substitute for a centralized organ of authority. This belief has been responsible for most of the failures of Liberalism either in or out of Government. If freedom has to be won by a conscious process of organization, Discipline should be a condition precedent. On the other hand, Liberalism, while it fought Despotism and purified public life could not build a democratic life outside the favoured soil of England and the Netherlands, because of its inability to appreciate this truth.

From the first, therefore, Gandhiji insisted upon internal discipline. He enforced discipline by diverse means. Against an intimate disciple, he would even fast, to evoke in him a sense of discipline. Against others, his technique was different. He would try to convert the rebel, expose, if need

arose, the moral weakness of his stand. If Gandhiji failed in the attempt, he would let the offender drift. He, himself, would cease to be accessible. And soon the culprit found himself alone or only in company with his co-rebels. Throughout this process, Gandhiji adopted a courtesy and consideration which placed the other man morally in the wrong.

He had his own way with large masses of men, when they committed breach of discipline. He would not decide upon a big step unless his followers assured him of disciplined obedience. If, after he started a venture, he found his followers guilty of insubordination or dereliction of duty, he would openly criticize them, confess his failure and withdraw the movement for the time being. His confession early in 1922, that the inauguration of Non-violent Non-co-operation in 1920 was a Himalayan blunder, is an instance in point. The declaration was provoked by the occurrence of mob violence in the village of Chauri Chaura in the Gorakhpur District in the United Provinces. Gandhiji followed the confession by an abrupt suspension of the Non-co-operation Movement in February 1922. Another instance is Gandhiji's public condemnation of the coercive mass picketing which Bombay adopted during the Civil Disobedience Movement, 1930-31. Some of us had thought that we had improved upon his methods; we remained to learn that thereby we had forsworn Non-violence.

The way of the leaders, who could use violence to enforce discipline among their followers is not open to Gandhiji. His technique lies in utilizing his moral authority, when need arises, to expose the weakness of his followers, to take the burden of their lapse on himself and to refuse to lead, if the required spirit of discipline is not forthcoming. This

technique does not always result in the immediate suppression of indiscipline as, for instance, the action of a Gestapo will. But it succeeds ultimately. It trains the followers to put forward organized action spontaneously. They learn that if they are to work under Gandhiji, it can be only on his conditions. And the idea of what Gandhiji would think of their action takes the place of conscience, and supplies the urge for self-imposed discipline.

CHAPTER XLIV

The Technique of Non-violence

FASCIST methods are alleged to have been used by Gandhiji against indiscipline. But his principal weapon for securing discipline has never been violence. It is only Moral Force. The rebel is free to leave him, if he so likes. But he cannot be a rebel and claim to follow the Leader at the same time. Gandhiji knows that, if in the name of liberty or in fear of the bogey of Fascism, he permits indiscipline, the attempt to organize a nation by Non-violence will be a ghastly failure.

A people can develop a Nation-State, as we saw, only in two ways. Firstly, where the people voluntarily unite themselves under the influence of the nation-idea and think and will the Nation into existence; secondly, where the people are made to unite under the coercive pressure of a centralized organization controlled by a Dictator or an Oligarchy, which has wrested the control of the State.

But, in a country where the people as a whole are not imbued with nationalism, a small group of Nationalists cannot obtain control of the State from a great military power, unless war or a general upheaval provides a favourable atmosphere, as it did in Russia, Turkey and Italy after the Great War. Under such chaotic conditions, internal discontent weakens the control of the existing Government, and a strong and compact Party with effective leadership, can attain success, if a well-equipped army, dissatisfied with the existing rulers, transfers its allegiance to that Party; but not otherwise. Success in such cases is

not based on a spontaneously working national *will*. The *willing* of a Nation into existence is restricted to a few, who use the Party as a tool and the people as material to be worked upon.

Gandhiji has abjured this method altogether. He has too great a sense of reality to believe that these conditions can come into existence in India. The coercive method is against the Law, and therefore its adoption will be fatal, in the long run. Similarly, he does not rely upon external aid or goodwill. Gandhiji's energies are concentrated on bringing into existence a spontaneous effort on the part of Indians to conceive and will the Indian Nation into existence. In order to evoke this spontaneous effort, he has made himself into an embodiment of the nation idea. He stands for national unity, national strength, national language, national Government, everything which represents the Nation. He studies the public mind ceaselessly. He has a genius for compelling all minds to be focussed on him.

He has also created a well-knit group of workers in all the provinces of India, who carry his message to the masses who inculcate and enforce discipline and, when necessary, lead or support mass action. These Gandhians provide the *steel frame* of all the organizations, through which Gandhiji works in the country, from the cities down to the villages. They are not his political followers only. They have a religious faith, if not in his methods, in him, the *Bapu* (father). They saved the Congress, when the British Government sought to crush it. They are the effective instruments of Direct Action, Constructive Work and Parliamentary Activity.

Gandhiji has his own technique of propaganda. Untruth is to be avoided at all costs. Ascertainment of facts

by open inquiry occupies an important place in it. No step is taken by the Party, unless it is morally sound and is based on a conscientious investigation of facts.

Gandhiji is the greatest propagandist of Gandhism. His weekly articles in *Young India*, an English weekly edited by him (1919-30) until it suspended publication during the Civil Disobedience Movement, 1930-31, and after the suspension of *Young India*, *Harijan*, an English weekly devoted to the cause of removal of Untouchability conducted under his ægis after his epic fast against the Communal Award in September 1932, formed and form the source of inspiration to hundreds of thousands of men every week. They derive their value not merely from what they say, but because they preach Truth in the sense of harmony between his thought, word, and deed and carry the germ of action within them. Action and suffering are thus used as the best instruments of propaganda. The Dandi march and the Harijan tour (1933-34) were forms of spectacular propaganda for creating the resisting mentality in the people. They led the masses to bring the Indian Nation into existence. The magic of his name also serves as propaganda in hamlets ; it is whispered about with awe and reverence and men and women even in the far-lying hamlets feel a conscious Unity. Once, I travelled by the same train as Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose, in 1939, when he was going to Poona to lecture against Gandhiji and the Working Committee. At a wayside station, a small crowd of admirers greeted him, and the greeting took the form of "Subhas Bose *ki-jai*" accompanied with the lusty refrain of "Mahatma Gandhi *ki-jai*" !

The modes of mass action evolved by Gandhiji are based on old forms which prevailed in India. Huge meetings and processions characterized by self-imposed order;

flag-salutations and prayers; the *khadi* dress and particularly the white *khadi* cap ; the singing of *Vande Mataram* and other national songs, these are some of the characteristic modes. But there are others, less ostentatious and more effective, which he has forged. The first of them is the *charkha.* Apart from its economic value, a man who takes to *charkha* unconsciously accepts those implications of Truth, Non-violence and Nationalism, as preached by Gandhiji, which he is capable of understanding! Many of Gandhiji's followers take to the *charkha*, as a sort of *puja*, a matter of votive offering to him. Others, whose outlook and tastes prevent them from adopting a mode of life prescribed by Gandhiji for his disciples also look upon the *charkha* as a symbol and a covenant which binds them to him. They do not ply the *charkha* ordinarily. Left to themselves they would not take it up. Then, the acid test of the *charkha* is prescribed by Gandhiji. Says Gandhiji—"*Charkha* is life," "*Charkha* is *Swaraj*," "*Charkha* is economic reconstruction of India." Suddenly, the attention of this class of intellectuals is directed towards it. They take to it as an act of willing or grudging loyalty, but they take to it, all the same.

"The weak thread from the wheel," Gandhiji recently wrote, "binds the millions in an unbreakable cord. One strand of the thread may be useless, but millions of unending threads spun by willing and knowing hands will make a cord strong enough to bear any strain that may be put upon it." In the process of taking up the *charkha*, minds which guide these willing and knowing hands are attuned to the idea, for which Gandhiji stands. And refreshed and invigorated, they come within that narrow circle, of those who have accepted the Gandhian message, and thus become unconscious instruments of what Gandhiji stands for.

CHAPTER XLV

Non-violent Resistance

THE most potent factor in organizing the masses on a large scale is the conflict which keeps the group idea before every individual, evokes determined Collective Action and creates group traditions. Except in the cases of the Hindus and Early Christians, conflict was not thought of, except in terms of violence. Neither Hobbes nor Rousseau could have thought of group conflict as a non-violent process. Marx invented the class-war, as a device with great possibilities, and it has provided Russia with the internal conflicts that were necessary to unify the Bolsheviks. Equally Hitler's anti-semitic atrocities were a form of conflict, which kept the edge of Collective Action perpetually sharpened.

Without a conflict, mass organization would be impossible. The violent mass conflicts, however, indicate a mental attitude of inflicting injury upon an antagonist. The opponent must be crushed, even at the cost of one's life. When revolutionary France sought an escape from extinction, it flung itself against the armies of Europe. But if one is pledged not to inflict an injury upon another, the conflict can only take the form of resisting Untruth and Violence. Without the power of such resistance, Non-violence would be "Non-violence of conduct born of impotence."

The underlying attitude adopted in *Satyagraha* or Non-violent Resistance is: "Here I am. This is my Truth. I

will not hurt you; I will hold fast to it; you may do what you will; I will face death cheerfully rather than forsake my truth."

This is the highest form of conflict which the Hindu Sages and the Early Christians understood. Gandhiji's Non-violent Resistance is Christ's doctrine of "Resist not Evil."

Gandhiji has pressed into the service of Non-violent Resistance, all forms of collective resistance, in which purposive injury to another is avoided. Men can picket shops so long as they do not forcibly bar the transgressor's ingress. They may also close their shops, and suffer economic loss. They can disobey a law, which they consider morally or politically unjust and suffer the penalties. They may withdraw their co-operation. They may leave the field of combat and go into the wilderness, leaving the opponent to his own devices. They may exercise Collective Self-control, a very difficult thing indeed, and become inactive and irresponsive. They may not move from what they consider right, leaving it to the opponent to kill them, if he would. The psychological basis of Non-violent Resistance therefore is to summon all the moral and mental energies of the individual to take an irrevocable collective stand, risking all consequences. The action might be to another's disadvantage, but no injury has been inflicted out of anger or malice.

This form of Non-violent Resistance is no doubt morally superior to the violent conflict. Gandhiji has claimed that it is equally, if not more, efficacious than a violent conflict. That the Non-violent form of conflict is more difficult to pursue goes without saying. It is easier to join the army and shoot in company, to join a furious mob and

to burn a house, or to take a revolver in a fit of insane enthusiasm and to shoot a Governor. But it requires greater determination and a keener sense of one's duties to walk out of one's bed and deliberately have one's head broken or to continue for two nerve-racking years in a miserable jail, when one word of regret can give freedom and the rewards of a normal life.

That is why, when Gandhiji has embarked on a mass non-violent resistance, impetuous men have, in the enormity of their ignorance, resorted to violence. But there is nothing in common between the two. And, those who believe that there is an easy transition from Non-violent Resistance to a violent conflict have not brought strength to the movement.

CHAPTER XLVI

The Efficacy of Non-violent Technique

THE process both of *conceiving* and *willing* a nation into existence is more conscious in Non-violent Resistance than in a violent conflict. In the period 1930-34, Non-violent Resistance spread the nation idea in India more effectively than was the case ever before. It gave courage to a timid and a harmless people ; stirred the villages of India to a new outlook, and its womanhood to a new freedom.

Certain facts may appear to detract from the efficacy of this technique. In 1932, when the British rulers resorted to severe repression, this form of resistance was suppressed within a few months. In Indian States, where the Princes have few scruples, it has not succeeded so far. Gandhiji has refused to embark upon struggles in Indian States, on the ground that the moral sense of the opponent has been blunted. Wherever there has been an outbreak of violence, he has withdrawn it, so that the opponent may not be justified in resorting to violence.

But under these very circumstances, would a violent conflict have succeeded ? If the terrorist movement were revived and a few dozen young men attempted to shoot a few dozen European officers, would India gain freedom ? If the Communist technique be tried, the industrial workers may go on strike. The railways may stop running. Street barricades may successfully defy the police in large industrial towns for a few days. Stray murder and rapine may unsettle a few villages. But would it lead to success ?

Violence having been adopted on one side, the other side can, with some show of justification, let loose organized frightfulness to crush the movement. The spirit of the people would be destroyed and political progress would be arrested.

Those, who urge the futility of Non-violent Resistance, ignore the conditions which have made violent conflict in other countries successful. Italy won its Independence because of factors other than the violent methods of the revolutionaries. The Austrian Empire was inefficient. The Great Powers had conspired to set it up as an independent kingdom and it was to the economic advantage of England to set up an independent Italy.

The success of the Bolsheviks in Russia was also the result of several factors independent of the violent mass conflict, which Lenin inaugurated. The Government of the Tsar was feeble. The Liberals, who opposed Lenin, were caught in the meshes of their own doctrines and permitted him to walk over their dead bodies. The Russian Army, demoralized in having to fight a war in which it had no interest, went over to Lenin. And lastly, the great neighbouring Powers were so busy fighting for their very existence, that they could not hinder the Bolshevik efforts to wrest power from the decadent rulers.

It is therefore fallacious to test the efficacy of Gandhism on the imaginary basis that under similar conditions, a violent conflict would succeed. As things are in India, the aid of great Powers and the active support of an Indian Army sufficient to cope with a Western Army is inconceivable.

Non-violent Resistance is self-sufficient and its technique is built on the solid foundation of a spontaneous

effort on the part of the people. Its success in the past was not due to adventitious support from the moral sense of the antagonist. Whoever pursues Non-violence eliminates hostile feelings in others, and it is in the very nature of self-inflicted suffering to evoke the best in the antagonist.

Antagonists of Indian Nationalism and men of little faith in the Congress have expressed their doubt as to whether Non-violence can secure international peace. Gandhiji recently stated:

> Hence we witness the sorry spectacle of us, confessing that, though this Non-violence of the weak may bring us freedom from the English rule, it cannot enable us to resist foreign invasion. This fact—and it is a fact—shows that, if the English yield to the Non-violence, miscalled of the weak, it would prove that they had almost made up their mind to surrender power and would not hold to it at the cost of creating frightfulness.

This doubt proceeds on the incorrect assumption that once Non-violent Resistance creates a nation, no violence will be found in it. Even if India gains *Swaraj* by its means, there would be many Indians, whose baser passions would have to be restrained by Force. This will equally be true of international life, when Non-violence becomes a potent factor in its regulation.

An independent nation, like a theoretically free man, is a figment of the imagination. The Nation-States, like the anti-social men imagined by Hobbes, have long been, though unconsciously, surrendering their freedom to an international framework which would eliminate strife. The British Empire, which provides the outstanding example of this surrender, had to alter its basis by conceding

autonomy to growing nations within the regulative framework of British policing. Just as the coercive processes in the State are brought into operation only in the hour of tumult, in the Empire, the British army and navy only provide a background of power, to restore order when necessary but eliminating themselves, so long as relations in the Commonwealth continue to be peaceful.

CHAPTER XLVII

Non-violence and the New World Order

AFTER the Great War, in 1919 the statesmen of Europe had the power to construct a new world out of the old. But President Wilson was a pedant, steeped in the out-of-date Liberalism, and had not learnt any lessons from those American statesmen who created a Federal Constitution of Power by depriving the States of their Sovereignty. Under President Wilson's influence, the European statesmen emphasized the independence of Nation-States and brought them together by Covenants but did not eliminate violent conflicts between the covenanting States by the creation of an organ of coercive power. The result is the present war.

Now only, do we see the next step towards the evolution of a new World Order in the Super-Federal Government, which France and England have created under the stress of dire necessity. These so-called independent Nation-States have one Military Department, one Department of Foreign Affairs and an interdependent economic system. In this war, victory will ultimately lie only with that group of Nation-States which would have parted with their sovereignty in these matters most effectively to a Super-Federal Government. Within such an international framework, violence would have been replaced by the rule of well-defined law. Within it, Gandhism alone can become the instrument of progress and organization.

Gandhism, therefore, does not seek the elimination of the police in either the national or the international sphere.

To-day the frontiers of violence are maintained round every nation under the name of defence and diplomacy. But if, by treaty or under the stress of war, they are extended, so as to protect a group of nations, the sphere of international peace would be proportionately enlarged.

But the doubt may conceivably be pursued further. What would happen when there is a war between the armed forces of two world groups? This question again involves a fallacy. It implies that even when two world groups are formed, each with an internal non-violent life of its own, the efficacy of violent conflict will be as great as in an era of unrestricted national sovereignties.

When autonomous nations pledge themselves to forms of Non-violent Resistance working as an international combine and are inspired by similar group habits they can be relied upon to exercise at least that power and influence which one individual, Gandhiji, has come to exercise upon a people who knew no method other than that of violence and to whom the principles of Truth and Non-violence were abstract doctrines.

Then, when the world groups of Nation-States create one framework for the whole human race, the twin children of coercion and camouflage—defence and diplomacy—would disappear and the barriers of violence which desiccate the world would have ceased to exist. Then Gandhism would have triumphed.

Viewed in this way, Gandhism is the only hope of the future.

And in this faith, I humbly follow the Mahatma.

GLOSSARY

Aryavarta - - - - Ancient name for India.

Ashram - - - - A small colony where people having common aims, ideals and faith live a corporate life to practise and to preach their aims and ideals.

Bapu - - - - - Father. Gandhiji is called Bapu by those who are closely associated with him. It is a term of endearment and respect.

Bharatiya - - - - Indian.

Bikshus - - - - Persons who have abandoned worldly married life and who live on self-regulated doles.

Brahmamuhurta - - - Early dawn, i.e., 4 a.m.

Brahmans - - - - The priestly class among Hindus.

Bundesstaat - - - - Federation-state.

Chappals - - - - A pair of leather sandals.

Charkha - - - - The spinning wheel.

Chauth - - - - One-fourth of the revenue.

Dakshina - - - - Southern.

Deshbandhu - - - The country's friend: a term of respect with which the late Mr. C. R. Das used to be addressed.

Dharma - - - - Religion, Duty or Law.

Fakir - - - - - A person who has renounced the world and is devoted to religion.

Gandhi-ji - - - - Ji is a term added to a name to show respect for the person.

Gita - - - - - One of the sacred books of India. It embodies the teaching of Shri Krishna—the God—to Arjuna in the great war between Pandavas and Kauravas.

Hans - - - - - Hindi magazine started by Mr. Premchand and the author. Ordinary parlance, swan.

Harijan - - - - Literally, means godly man. The term is used to describe the classes known as untouchables to the orthodox Hindus.

Himalayan mistake	The Himalayas being the greatest mountains in the world, hence Himalayan mistake means the greatest mistake.
Hindi *Prachar Sabha*	An association for the spread of the Hindi language.
Hindi *Sahitya Sammelan*	Literary conference of Hindi authors.
Inquilab Zindabad!	Long Live Liberty or Revolution!
Isvarapranidhana	Surrender to God.
Jallianwala Baug	A place in Amritsar where General Dyer shot down Indians.
Japti	Distress.
Karma Yoga—Yogi	"The doctrine of action irrespective of results" as expounded in the *Gita*. A person who believes in the doctrine and lives accordingly.
Kathiawadi *Angarkha and Sapha.*	The old style coat and the loosely folded turban used by people of Kathiawad.
Khadi	Handspun, handwoven cloth.
Khatedar	A person who holds land for which he has to pay revenue to Government.
Kheduts	Farmers or agriculturists.
—ki-jai	Victory or glory to—.
Lokamanya	Respected of the people : a term of respect with which the late Mr. B. G. Tilak used to be addressed.
Mahavratas	Great vows.
Mahatma	Great soul.
Mahatmic	Peculiar to a great soul.
Mantra	Verse.
Manu	Name of the greatest ancient Hindu Law-giver.
Mitakshara	A commentator on the Code of Laws by Manu.
Navajivan	New life; the name of a weekly.
Nazar	Treasury officer in charge of money.
Nirvana Gospel	Final absolution, according to Buddha.
Panchanama	A report of five men called in to assess the value of distressed property.
Pat-pat-pat	A sound made by walking with a pair of wooden sandals on.
Patel	Headman of a village appointed by Government.
Prabhat Feris	A procession going on morning rounds singing patriotic songs.

Puja - - - - - Worship.
Purna Swaraj - - - *Purna*—complete, and *swaraj*—independence, and hence *Purna Swaraj* —complete independence.
Ramabana - - - - Like the arrow of Shri Rama, the Hindu deity. An effective blow or effective remedy.
Rishi - - - - - A venerable sage.
Ryots - - - - Agriculturists.
Sadhu - - - - A saintly person.
Sahasrarjuna - - - Mythic emperor of India.
Sahitya Parishad - - Literary Conference.
Sanyasi - - - - An ascetic.
Sardar - - - - A general : a term with which Mr. Vallabhbhai Patel is addressed.
Satyagraha - - - - Literally, insistence on Truth. But politically it means direct action through non-violent means.
Satyagrahi - - - - One who follows *satyagraha.*
Satyanarayan - - - It means God as Truth or Truth as God.
Staatenbund - - - A confederacy of States.
Swadeshi - - - - Belonging to one's own land. *Swadeshi* movement is one the object of which is to advocate buying of home-made articles.
Talati - - - - Revenue officer of a village.
Taluka - - - - A geographical sub-division of a district in British India.
Vande Mataram - - - National anthem of India.
Vanavasa - - - - Living in a forest.
Varnasrama - - - The fourfold division of society according to Hindu thinkers. The four classes are : Brahmans—Priests; Kshatriya—Warriors; Vaishya—Merchants and agriculturists; Shudra —the lowest class.
Vidyapitha - - - - University.
Yoga - - - - - A doctrine and practice of attaining perfection in life.
Yogi - - - - - An adept in the doctrine or practice of *Yoga.*

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